

THE CRAFTING OF CONCEALMENT IN
MARGARET LAURENCE'S THE STONE ANGEL

THE CRAFTING OF CONCEALMENT: A COMPARATIVE STUDY OF THE
TYPESCRIPT AND TEXT OF MARGARET LAURENCE'S THE STONE ANGEL

By

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Abstract

Margaret Laurence confesses in Dance on the Earth: A Memoir that she felt compelled to write about something that women's published writing was lacking. Her novels are self-consciously about "Physical reality...ordinariness, dirt, earth, blood, yelling [and] a few messy kids" (Laurence 130). In an interview with Michel Fabre she contends that "there are certain things I can get at only through women.... Also there are a great many male novelists and it is about time more women wrote about women" (Woodcock 204). Laurence's novel, The Stone Angel is just such a novel. It celebrates the female and in so doing becomes a paradigm of Hélène Cixous's "writing with a difference."

The Stone Angel is a novel in which Laurence purposefully invites readers into the world of women. In so doing, the narrative offers a discourse which affirms a confessional, personal and sometimes neurotic female subject position. Such a position in The Stone Angel becomes a locus of power. Nonetheless, there is a marked tension between the typescript and the novel. Admittedly, some of Laurence's

deletions are the result of a refinement in her craftsmanship and scholarship. However, many of the deletions have a much broader implication and reveal Laurence's internal struggle. These deletions are most compelling and expose Laurence's insecurity in writing from a female subject position.

This thesis will compare the typescript of The Stone Angel to the published version. The purpose of such an examination is two-fold. First, the disparities between Laurence's private work and the product she presents to a public audience illustrate the gender confinement Laurence experienced as a woman writing in the early sixties. Second, the degree to which societal/cultural constraints informed Laurence's authorial censorship cannot be ignored. To my mind, Hagar Shipley's uneasiness with a shifting private/public world offers a glimpse of the tension with which Laurence herself was struggling.

The introduction presents the very private, shy Margaret Laurence and her work habits. Chapter One is an overview of the existing criticism of the text of The Stone Angel, particularly articles which relate to themes in this thesis. The second chapter explores the tension between the private and public spheres in the text and the themes which make The Stone Angel an example of Hélène Cixous's écriture féminine and a model of feminist literature. Chapter Three outlines the deletions and the corresponding entries in the

published text. The fourth chapter examines the disparity between the typescript's and the novel's entries relating to religion. Chapter Five focuses on the treatment of death, motherhood and sex in the typescript and the text. Such an arrangement of topics is in truth a false separation, for all the themes are connected and impact on one another with a kind of synergistic energy. Nonetheless, the divisions are meant to be a way to better understand Laurence, the typescripts and Hagar.

Hagar, despite or perhaps because of her marginalization, becomes a symbol of a new way of knowing, a new way of seeing things - a symbol of the feminine. Because of Laurence's manipulation of idiom and discourse, Hagar Shipley offers immediate access to readers because she is everyone's Grandmother; in many ways Hagar is every woman. In Laurence's own words:

If Hagar in The Stone Angel has any meaning, it is the same as that of an old woman anywhere, having to deal with the reality of dying. On the other hand, she is not an old woman anywhere. She is very much a person who belongs in the same kind of prairie Scots-Presbyterian background as I do, and it was, of course, people like Hagar who created that background, with all its flaws and its strengths.
(Heart of a Stranger 18)

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"Gainsay who dare."

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Introduction

Will the real Margaret Laurence please stand up?

The world had changed; I had grown older...I no longer believed so much in the promised land, even the promised land of one's own inner freedom. With The Stone Angel ...the theme had changed to that of survival, the attempt of the personality to survive with some dignity, toting the load of excess mental baggage that everyone carries, until the moment of death.

(Laurence "Ten Years' Sentence")

The Stone Angel was published in 1964. Margaret Laurence, in her autobiography, confirms that the "book meant an enormous amount to me... and the novel into which I had invested my life, heart and spirit... I hoped that the novel wouldn't get too many bad reviews" (Dance on the Earth 165). Interestingly, the typescript for The Stone Angel has more deletions than its sisters in the Manawaka cycle. More significantly, Laurence took great care to ensure that the deletions remained intensely private. She scored each of the cancelled lines with heavy black marker. Some of the erasures are totally indistinguishable. These will forever be Margaret's secrets. Whether such an erasure of the typescript's original text reflects a fear of rejection or ridicule remains unclear.

Years later, despite Laurence's established literary acceptance and acclaim, this same anxiety about approbation is

echoed in the typescript of her novel The Diviners as well as overtly in the published text. For example, in the typescript, Morag admonishes herself, "unless you can get to work right now and write something which will be good enough to be published" (ts 24). In the novel Pique explicitly sums up an artist's fragility when she reproaches her mother, "You're so goddam proud and so scared of being rejected. You're stupid in that way, you really are" (236). Perhaps the most telling critiques are posed in The Diviners's typescript: "Too many unknown factors, too many complexities, too many anxieties. How in hell could anyone get any work done under these circumstances?", and the ultimate indignity, "Would her books at some recent future point be used as terrifying examples in High School courses? ... no, let us act out our natural feelings, then, and make a bonfire of this book" (ts 317, 119). Ironically, The Diviners was the novel that would in fact be the subject of widespread controversy and criticism as fundamentalists attempted to "make a bonfire of this book" in banning it from Grade thirteen reading lists in Peterborough County.

Laurence took great care to ensure the privacy of the typescripts by placing an embargo which directs that none of the excised portions throughout the work could ever be printed in a review article, critical article or anywhere else. McMaster University houses the typescripts of many of

Laurence's novels. These are the only surviving typescripts; the manuscripts seem to have disappeared. In correspondence to Dr. William Ready of McMaster, dated October 19, 1966, Laurence says: "...manuscripts seem to be missing and I can't think what has happened to them. They may turn up ultimately." She confirms that The Stone Angel typescript which she has forwarded to McMaster is "the first typed version, with all my re-writing and deletions." On November 8, 1966, she confesses: "I think that the original manuscripts... have disappeared."

The Stone Angel typescript does not bear any editor's marks, so it was not the copy sent to the compositor. Furthermore, we know this typescript was not the original manuscript by Laurence's own admission and by her confirmation to Clara Thomas that "she writes a first draft longhand, making changes as she goes along, but not, basically, rewriting or revising... she types out the longhand version, doing some rewriting in the process, mainly cutting out verbiage. The most important revising and rewriting comes after the typescript is completed" (Thomas 11). In an interview with Michel Fabré, Laurence affirms: "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" (Woodcock 199). For Laurence, it could be argued that the notion of being 'more fluent' is a metaphor for being less inhibited--a fact which may well account for the disappearance of all the manuscripts.

It seems somewhat implausible that Laurence could simply have misplaced the original manuscripts. Arguably, the original scribblers Laurence used may have been accidentally lost or destroyed in the moves to and from England. Yet Laurence casts doubt on such a possibility when she confesses to Ready in a letter on January 6, 1974 that no amount of money could persuade her "to let ANYONE SEE THEM, EVER!" She adds, "I find I cannot bear to contemplate those bits which I have carefully taken out, ...being at some time or other printed...I just hate people reading bits I've cut out."

Such an obsession with keeping her deletions concealed and inaccessible may well indicate more than an artist's scrupulous commitment to revision. Obviously, Margaret was concerned with artistic revision too. For instance, a page is inserted between Chapter Six and Chapter Seven of the typescript of The Fire-Dwellers. It is a personal note Laurence made to herself. It says: "Go through very carefully for: repetition, verbosity, B. sentimentalism. sentimental journey" (ts 46). Such a reminder speaks of the need for Laurence to conform to a specific model of writing. The horror is that the imposition itself was so blatant that

a talent like Laurence felt the necessity to set down the rules for reference. Nonetheless, these are not the revisions I engage in my argument.

There are also revisions that reveal a different dimension. The following are deletions that aren't necessarily in either camp: they tend not to reflect Margaret's psyche nor are they, in the strictest sense, driven by any semantic force. For example, Laurence alters our view of Lottie by changing her description from "simpering" in the typescript to "coy" in the finished text (ts 8, 12). Our view of Lottie is further revised as the published novel's depiction of the killing of the chickens seems to be less an act of mercy than in the typescript's version. Such an alteration potentially positions Lottie as less innocent and more duplicitous in terms of the role she plays in manipulating the future of John and Arlene. Such a revision would allow for a space for sympathy towards Hagar for her part in the conspiracy. Similarly, in a moment of truth in the typescript, Hagar's use of language is described as "no better" than Marvin's. Whereas Marvin is unable to articulate language, Hagar is unable to express herself through language. Such a telling admission, however, is deleted from the novel. In the novel, we are told that "Words would not come to [Marvin's] bidding" (130). Rather than establishing a comparison between Marvin and Hagar, such a statement sets up

a dichotomy between Hagar and Marvin who "was never a quick thinker" (130). The typescript similarly states that "[Marvin] doesn't know what to say" (ts 254). Nonetheless this is deleted from the novel and, in fact, at the novel's end Marvin is very much in control as he ensures her comfort and articulates love, respect and reverence for his mother, most poignantly in his exclamation to the nurse: "She's a holy terror" (272).

The typescript has huge deletions towards its end which involve Hagar's confrontations and battles with the nursing staff at the hospital. These are not recorded in the list of deletions in Chapter Three because they reflect an editing of a different sort. Laurence probably deleted these conflicts because they are not congruent with a dying woman's behaviour. In addition, this editing allows for a smoother reading; the quarrels are pedantic and weaken rather than strengthen the novel's conclusion. While these deletions do not necessarily reveal Laurence's personality, they do, through their painstaking scoring-out, point to her pre-occupation with privacy.

Indeed, Margaret Laurence was an intensely private, and by her own admission, shy person. This thesis will explore the motivation for Laurence's compulsion with privacy. Margaret seemed to accept the pressure of working in an isolated way in order to be creative. She asserts in her

autobiography, "Loneliness was an almost constant part of my life, but I had always been a lonely person" (170). A fellow writer, Don Bailey laments: "But who nurtured Margaret? Who nurtured her? Andreas Schroeder insists, So here was an immensely tragic figure, one of the best-loved writers in the country, who was lonely as hell" (Wainwright xiii). Laurence, however, never allowed her loneliness to thwart her writing. In fact much of her loneliness was self-imposed. She tells Hugh MacLennan:

I am trying to keep regular working hours, and I turn my phone off from 9 a.m. to 2 p.m., weekdays, and I have a sign on my door that says I'm working at those hours and please will people call later! It is agony...
(Wainwright 122)

Helen Buss maintains that The Stone Angel is not a portrayal of isolation but rather a portrayal of the feminine search for relatedness despite all the forces of isolation ("Mother and Daughter" 30). Laurence corroborates this tenet repeatedly in interviews and in letters resolutely affirming that the novel is one about freedom, about survival. Laurence has portrayed a vulnerable woman in the character of Hagar Shipley. But she has also depicted a woman who speaks from the centre just as Margaret writes from her own centre, a centre defined by feminist ideology.

In much the same way that Laurence wrote from her centre, purposefully speaking through the first-person voice of a strong woman, Hagar Shipley, this thesis will employ a

dialogical methodology. Which is to say that the "I" is self-consciously employed in an effort to engage in an honest expression of self. When this thesis was in its formative stages, I found myself caught in the same conundrum as Margaret Laurence. By that I mean, the writing became a construct, edited and censored for the audience who would be reading it. Such a practice seemed disloyal to feminist scholarship as well as to Laurence. In opposition to a more traditional (patriarchal) model of thesis engagement, then, the first person will be used judiciously but without apology. Such a process of writing is in keeping with what I believe Margaret Laurence set out to do as well as what Hélène Cixous's manifesto, "The Laugh of the Medusa", celebrates:

I shall speak about women's writing: about what it will do. Woman must write her self: must write about women and bring women to writing, from which they have been driven away as violently as from their bodies...Woman must put herself into the text - as into the world and into history - by her own movement...Her writing can only keep going, without ever inscribing or discerning limits...She lets the other language speak - the language of 1,000 tongues which knows neither enclosure nor death.

(Cixous 1975a 245,259-60)

In addition, throughout this thesis, when reference is made to the 'female voice' or the 'female subject position,' it is in acknowledgment that such descriptions are not universal. Indeed, one could argue that Margaret Thatcher and REAL women speak authoritatively and from a subject position. However, they do not represent the feminist perspective which

gives value to a female-centred vision. For the purpose of this thesis, female (when used in the above context) becomes interchangeable with feminist and in the broadest sense implies moving against the grain of masculine, objectivity-claiming discourse.

My last disclaimer addresses the occasional informal reference I make to Margaret Laurence as 'Margaret.' Such a familiarity is not intended to be disrespectful. Rather, I feel a certain intimacy with Laurence. The first time I held her cheap, yellow-papered, typescript in my hands, I felt she was speaking to me--an experience which was both wonderful and frightening. I have since held other writers' manuscripts, typescripts, letters and have never felt a similar connection. Perhaps Alice Williams, Margaret's Lakefield friend, expresses it best. She calls this energy "a joining of kindred spirits" (Interview). Williams felt this same affinity with Margaret.

Chapter One

The Stone Angel: the way the critics read Laurence

The Stone Angel is Laurence's best known and perhaps most respected work. It is the novel which has been hailed by George Woodcock as a Canadian classic and which has earned Laurence comparison with Tolstoy (The World of Canadian Writing 40). The Stone Angel is the genesis of the Manawaka Cycle and the venue which introduces the characters who are resurrected and given voice in the other novels. (Book-length studies of Laurence's novels, collections of essays, and numerous articles have examined Laurence's work and particularly The Stone Angel.) However, little attention has been allotted to the typescripts. For the purpose of this overview, then, the focus of the criticism resides explicitly with the completed version of the text.

As even this brief survey will show, much attention has been paid to the thematic aspects of The Stone Angel as well as to the national and regional mien of the text as a Canadian novel. It is quite clear from this selective survey of criticism that the articles, while offering a detailed and fairly comprehensive analysis of The Stone Angel as a novel, do not make any statement about the scope of the typescript. However, they do touch on some major issues of interest to

this thesis.

A Place to Stand On edited by George Woodcock, is a collection of essays by and about Margaret Laurence. In this collection W.H. New 's article, "Every Now and Then," explores the ways in which the narrative structure of The Stone Angel deals with the shifting of time and how such a shifting is also apparent in the language and diction of Hagar Shipley. New contends that "the language she uses shapes an argument of anger into a revelation of love" (172). In my view, New alerts readers to the major theme of this thesis:

To read The Stone Angel properly requires listening, I suggest, in this way: for the possibilities-to listen to the message that the voice in the words declares, a message often hidden, often indirect, often overlaid with fabrication and contrivance, but there to be heard. (191)

New contends in another article published by Études Canadiennes, entitled "The Stone Angel and the Manawaka Cycle," that Laurence's focus in this novel had changed as "her regard for the intricacies of family relationships was to become apparent" (23). New also argues that The Stone Angel is really a novel about shifting cultures. New states that Hagar:

is deeply touched 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. (31)

Again, New has gestured towards a major theme in this thesis,

the motif of motherhood as it exists for Hagar. One could argue it is impossible to entirely separate motherhood from Hagar in the same way it is impossible to separate motherhood from any discussion of Laurence.

Clara Thomas, who was a close friend of Laurence, offers a discussion of Laurence's work from A Tree for Poverty (1954) to The Diviners (1974) in her work The Manawaka World of Margaret Laurence. This study includes work from Thomas's first book, Margaret Laurence, which was published in 1969, as well as excerpts from various articles which Thomas had written in the interim. Thomas contends that Laurence's women are "strong and strongly maternal. They also feel the imperatives of emotion, of guilt and desire, sexuality and individuality that all women share" (193). Moreover, Thomas argues that Laurence's novels expose the ways in which society impacts on the female protagonists and the ways in which their lives are somewhat controlled by the demands that society imposes on women based on their gender. While Thomas's argument refers to the novels, one could argue that Thomas was also speaking of Laurence and the gender oppression Laurence must have experienced writing in the sixties when it was indeed a disadvantage to be both a writer and female.

Christl Verduyn, as editor of Margaret Laurence An Appreciation, has provided readers with a collection of essays on a number of Laurence's works. Specifically dealing with

The Stone Angel is an article by Clara Thomas entitled "Pilgrims' Progress: Margaret Laurence and Hagar Shipley." In this article, Thomas compares Hagar Shipley to Laurence and argues that both share a profound sense of life as a gift. In keeping with the title, Thomas also contends that both Laurence and Hagar undertake pilgrimages. Thomas convincingly compares Laurence with the writer, Joyce Cary. Her argument is: "Cary too was a religious novelist and the over-arching themes of all his works are freedom, faith, and the revelation of life's meaning and purpose that come as gifts of grace" (Verduyn 61). These same themes of freedom and survival are evident in all the novels in the Manawaka cycle but most overtly in The Stone Angel. In fact, one could argue that Laurence is a revisionist storyteller, retelling the ancient tale of Agar, Abraham and Ishmael. The vision of grace, of which Thomas speaks, pre-occupies Margaret's writing as well as her own sense of identity as a writer.

Verduyn has included in her publication an article by Evelyn J. Hinz, "The Religious Roots of the Feminine Identity Issue: Margaret Laurence's The Stone Angel and Margaret Atwood's Surfacing." Hinz contends that The Stone Angel serves as a text which questions the relationship between religious issues and female identity. The article concludes by suggesting that Laurence in The Stone Angel in fact does not support feminist contentions regarding the oppressive

nature of religion but rather points out "the way in which the Judaeo-Christian tradition fosters egocentricity and in turn alienation and loneliness by reason of its monotheistic character" (Verduyn 99). Such an argument suggests that Judaeo-Christian doctrines are oppressive but not in any gender-specific manner. This argument is not convincingly supported historically, nor in praxis in The Stone Angel. For example, Hinz's argument would contend that Jason Currie, (an interesting inclusion of the initials J.C.), is as adversely affected by his Scots Presbyterian theology as is Hagar. Such is not the case. In fact, Chapter Four of this thesis sets out to expose the many ways in which women have been intentionally excluded from many of the rituals and practices of Christianity.

Female archetypes, in both Jungian and classical mythology, have provided the stimulus for a number of feminist critics. Stephanie Demetrakopoulos, in her article "Laurence's Fiction: A Revisioning of Feminine Archetypes," draws a parallel between the archetypal characters of Greek mythology and Laurence's female protagonists. Nancy Bailey, in her work "Margaret Laurence, Carl Jung and the Manawaka Women," elects to apply a Jungian approach to Laurence's heroines. Bailey contends that in keeping with Jung's observation:

commonly the shadow is projected onto another persona

instead. Hagar projects hers onto Lottie, but also it seems, back onto her dead mother. (313) —

Bailey also notes that Hagar's denial of her inner self (another Jungian diagnosis) is most apparent when Hagar is hospitalized at the novel's conclusion and is unaware of crying out Bram's name. The relevance of these two articles is most specific in the argument suggested earlier and expanded in greater detail in Chapter Four, in which Laurence proves herself to be a revisionist mythmaker, storyteller, and religious modernist. In this role, Laurence's stories continually return to discussions of motherhood.

In keeping with this contention, Helen Buss in Mother and Daughter Relationships in the Manawaka Works of Margaret Laurence compares Carl Jung's state of early childhood to Hagar's state of physical dependency. Buss argues that the true genius of The Stone Angel is Laurence's "portrayal of the feminine search for ^{a meaningful relationship} relatedness despite all the forces of isolation" (Buss 30). Moreover, Buss contends that Hagar's true identification as a woman is achieved at Shadow Point through her identification with Keats's Meg Merrilies. This theme is examined in Joan Coldwell's article "Hagar as Meg Merrilies, The Homeless Gipsy." Coldwell states that Hagar's "wandering caused by dispossession might be said to be one of the dominant themes in The Stone Angel" (96). For the purpose of the argument made in this thesis, Joan Coldwell makes two

home

most convincing evaluations. First, she notes that Hagar is more comforted by reciting Keats's poem than by the twenty-third Psalm. Such a distinction is triggered by Hagar's disenchantment with religion. Coldwell draws our attention to the central fact that it is the stranger, Murray F. Lees, not the Presbyterian minister, Mr. Troy, who successfully offers reconciliation to Hagar. Second, Coldwell recognizes that one of the truths that helps redeem Hagar is her discovery "that 'home' is not necessarily a house at all" (96). 'Home,' given Coldwell's definition, or given Hagar's ultimate understanding, clearly resides in the most private sphere--the internal sphere of self.

Constance Rooke, in "A Feminist Reading of The Stone Angel," analyzes Christianity in Hagar's life and her resistance to it. Rooke argues that patriarchy, as represented by Jason Currie, is the genesis of Hagar's 'stoniness.' In addition, she asserts that "an education which aims at making women decorative will keep her dependent on men" (32). In this way Rooke invites readers to assess the systemic, pernicious nature of patriarchy. For example, Rooke declares, "the root cause of Hagar's dilemma is religion...for her father's dour Presbyterianism holds that sexuality is evil" (33). Murray Lees's story, like Hagar's, says Rooke, is "a tale in which religion plays an important role, where the chief villains are a concern for appearance and the denial of

sexuality" (38). In keeping with the themes of this thesis, then, Rooke is suggesting that there is a conflation of patriarchy, religion and Hagar's (insert women's) oppression. Rooke also declares that Laurence's primary motive for including Mr. Oatley is to announce "the wrongs which have been perpetrated against women by male society" (35).

The most recent book-length study of Laurence is The Crafting of Chaos (1994) by Hildegard Kuester. In this work, the narrative structure of The Stone Angel and The Diviners is studied by analyzing and comparing the texts. Kuester devotes seven pages to an investigation of the typescript drafts of The Stone Angel kept in the archives at McMaster University. Kuester's focus, however, radically differs from that of this thesis in that she is interested in the insertions which appear in the novel and which are not present in the typescript.

For the most part, Kuester argues that "The majority of alterations in the final version of the novel concern techniques of characterization" (76). She also maintains that Laurence's editing is primarily motivated by a "concern with plausibility" (77). She lists the determinants for revision as: techniques of characterization, and an attempt by Laurence to amalgamate tragic and comic elements into the text which do not quite achieve this goal in the typescript. Kuester

maintains that "Laurence did not intend to rewrite the story of the Biblical Hagar in modern garb" (73). Rather, in her opinion, the Old Testament merely speaks to the "parallels already present in prairie fiction" (73).

This thesis focuses on the typescript deletions which do not appear in the novel. In addition, my evidence refutes Kuester's claims that the changes reflect formal choices aimed at refining the narrative structure of the novel. I intend to make the case that Laurence's deletions are motivated by an intensely personal agenda. The other major point of contention I found with Kuester's analysis was her claim:

Compared to the changes made to the previous versions of The Fire-Dwellers and The Diviners, the alterations to The Stone Angel are minor in nature, however. With her first Canadian novel, Laurence never experienced the difficulties she had with her later fiction. (82)

My findings were contrary. With the exception of the blocks of pages which are missing from The Diviners typescript (this is discernible from the numbering system Laurence uses for the typescript draft), The Stone Angel typescript has as many deletions as The Fire-Dwellers and The Diviners. I would argue that Laurence's alterations, specifically those which have been defined by their overscoring with black ink, are not minor in nature. These changes signify that Laurence had some difficulty with this novel. Arguably, Laurence, when asked by Clara Thomas if the introductory pages of The Stone

Angel required much revision and rewriting, answered, "None. It all came just like that, as it is now on the page" (Verduyn 60). One need only to examine the typescript to know that, despite the fact that this draft is not the first, there was considerable revision and rewriting.

Chapter Two

The Stone Angel: a paradigm of public/private tension
and feminist discourse

The only thing I really feel is that, at least with my Canadian-based novels and stories, what I care about trying to do is to express something that in fact everybody knows, but doesn't say.

(Laurence quoted in Thomas 12)

In Heart of a Stranger Laurence says of her own experience in Neepawa:

When I was eighteen I couldn't wait to get out of that town, away from the prairies. I did not know then that I would carry the land and town all my life within my skull, that they would be the mainspring and source of the writing I was to do, wherever and however far away I might live. This was my territory in the time of my youth, and in a sense my life since then has been an attempt to look at it, to come to terms with it.

(217)

In many ways, Margaret Laurence's leaving of Neepawa calls to mind Hagar Shipley's leaving of Manawaka in The Stone Angel. Such a leaving is like an emergence from the private sphere into the public sphere. In a similar way, the process of writing for Laurence took her private thoughts and put them on a page to be read by a public audience. Such a private to public shift was not easily negotiated, particularly for someone as shy as Laurence. Her public-speaking posture attests to the scope of her insecurity in this sphere. Brenda

Neill, a Lakefield friend, tells how "Margaret's hands would tremble and she would have to sit to speak because her knees were knocking" (Interview). The audience causing her such uneasiness was nine and ten year old school children. Nonetheless, she dealt with her reticence to speak and addressed this group. She was selective, though, and often refused requests to speak publicly. However, she did go public in her writing.

Margaret Laurence took an enormous personal risk in writing The Stone Angel. As she recalls in her memoirs: "This was the novel for which I had separated from my husband and embarked on who knows what, uprooting and dragging along my two children" (Dance on the Earth 159). The novel remains an example of the female confessional style of writing but with a profound twist. Confessional writing was defined by Quiller Couch at the turn of the century as "vague, weak, tremulous and pastel" (Atwood 75). Quiller Couch's analysis insisted that masculine discourse is characterized as objective and universal while the feminine is confessional, personal and neurotic. The former had value; the latter did not. Laurence has revised such an analysis by integrating the masculine and the feminine. Which is to say, The Stone Angel may be written in a confessional, narrative structure but it is simultaneously subjective, objective, and universal in its accessibility and appeal. Purposefully, Laurence has married

the private and the public.

In order to create this union, Laurence has initially portrayed Hagar Shipley, the protagonist, as a total failure as a woman. She cannot achieve emancipation until she integrates the personal and the social; in other words, she must balance the male-gendered public realm and the female-gendered private one. Hagar is unable to communicate her feelings to those around her; she denies her sexuality. She admits that pride was her downfall; she was alone and she was never free (261). Her failure, however, is the result of her embracing the male characteristics of her father to the exclusion of the feminine characteristics of her mother. Laurence, in a letter to Frank Paci, describes Hagar as one of the "strong mother figures...who are so difficult, so hard, so needful" (Wainwright 151). Hagar is needful. She craves: a nurturer, a mother, a female role model. Without one, she lacks the resources to dismantle life's hard, difficult obstacles. Hagar is only able to transcend these barriers and achieve freedom from her alienation after an agonizing struggle. Such a liberation becomes possible once she reconciles the private and the public, the female and the male.

Her salvation is brought about by an ability to love, to accept love, to share, to meet and to touch. That is, she must embrace the female qualities of emotionality and love

which she has spent her life rejecting. Such a resistance is partially due to her identification as Jason Currie's property. Hagar internalizes her father's pride (since she has no respected female role model to act as any balance) and becomes "like a pint-sized peacock" (6). She has incorporated a (public) male ideology and divorced herself from any (private) female ideology.

Women in Manawaka are defined by their relationship to men. It follows then that women become men's property--commodities. Hagar, Jason Currie's daughter, becomes Hagar, Bram Shipley's wife. Such an analysis begs us to consider the motives for Hagar's marrying Bram. Part of her decision is to defy her father; marriage is also the only way women can change their status within the existing Manawaka parameters. It is only years later that Hagar realizes that her union with Bram was a different source of liberation. Bram, after all, never called her, nor even thought of her, as wife or mother of his children. To him, she was always Hagar. (69)

Lottie Dreiser's mother has no status in the community because she has no husband. At her death, (we never learn her name) Jason Currie asserts that "Her sort isn't much loss to the town" (15). This non-status extends to her daughter, Lottie. In fact, Lottie is called No-name Lottie because she has no father. Lottie is able to make the transition from being a non-entity whom Telford's mother "wouldn't listen to,"

to being a respected citizen by marrying Telford Simmons. For Lottie, marriage offers an identification, an entrance into the community. Curiously, it is Lottie who buys the accoutrements of society, the Limoges dishes, the silver candelabra and opal earrings from Hagar. In a sense, she purchases the traditional symbols of the private sphere which Hagar must part with in order to enter the public sphere. This same private/public confrontation resurfaces in A Bird in the House when Vanessa's mother sells her dishes to pay for Vanessa's university tuition.

The tension in The Stone Angel remains unresolved as Hagar acknowledges that the private things, the decanter, her mother's picture, etc. are the very things that "support and comfort [her]" (51). In other words, these commodities privatize women but they also are the threads that join women. The significance of this "stuff" (Hagar's word) is generational. For instance, "There's the plain brown pottery pitcher, edged with anemic blue, that was Bram's mother's, brought here from some village in England and very old" (54). This pitcher has survived at least two major moves and will be cared for by a third generation as "Tina says it's valuable" (54). Such a statement of importance reinforces the value of the domestic sphere and reflects the faulty notion that women's "things" should or could be bought and sold. The strain between the public and private sphere is reproduced in

the double-edged situation which arises from the treatment of Hagar's (women's/private) totems which have immense value in the private sphere but become problematic when they become connected with the public sphere.

This same tension is evident in Hagar's faulty understanding of herself and her obvious imprisonment by circumstances, and yet throughout her life she continually speaks authoritatively and from a subject position. In my view, this makes The Stone Angel an example of the écriture féminine that Helene Cixous argued women must employ in order to achieve literary and academic emancipation. For Cixous écriture féminine is a text:

that work(s) on the difference...strive(s) in the direction of difference, struggle(s) to undermine the dominant phallogentric logic, split(s) open the closure of the binary opposition and revel(s) in the pleasure of open-ended textuality. (Moi 108)

Cixous is suggesting that writing is, in and of itself, a public activity. She says that women need to blur the boundaries between the very private thought process and the very public process of writing. This is precisely what Laurence has done. Cixous insists that "Femininity in writing can be discerned in a privileging of the voice: writing and voice...are woven together" (Moi 114). Her notion of writing with a difference, then, by definition must be a critique of phallogentrism as it exists institutionally, ideologically and

practically. In addition, écriture féminine is a new way of focusing on and representing women's consciousness. The former greatly impacts on the latter as patriarchy has systemically reduced women's self-knowledge and ability to express themselves. Hagar narrates the story in her own voice, weaving together Laurence's writing and the female voice. In so doing, the discourse in the narrative consciously blurs the domestic and public spheres in which Hagar moves.

Chapter Three
Typescript vs. Novel

"We know that Margaret Laurence's aim in life is to destroy the home and the family." I said to myself that people who wrote and thought those things didn't know me and had certainly not read my books with understanding, but it still hurt that anybody could feel that way. (Dance 216).

When there's no hope of heaven--there's no fear of hell (S.A. ts 208).

The inclusion of this material in the main body of the thesis, as opposed to in an appendix, is intended as a statement of its importance. The typescript material is fundamental to my focus and as such demands placement in a separate chapter of its own.

The following deletions are exactly as they appear in the typescript with the respective entries (where applicable) as they appear in the novel. Some of the deletions are an exercise in 'cutting out verbiage'; most reflect a different sort of censoring.

Novel:

"then" is deleted three times from the first page.

Novel:

When Regina died, from some obscure and maidenly disorder, the old disreputable lady rose from sick-smelling sheets and lived, to the despair of her married sons, another full ten years. (2)

Typescript:

When Regina died, from some obscure and maidenly disorder, caused no doubt by her unused womanhood, the old disreputable lady rose from sick-smelling sheets and lived, to the despair of her married sons, another full ten years. (2)

Novel:

No need to say God rest her soul, for she must be laughing spitefully in hell, while virginal Regina sighs in heaven. (2)

Typescript:

No need to say God rest her soul, for she must be laughing spitefully in hell, while virginal idiotic Regina sighs in heaven. (2)

Novel:

But one dissembles, usually for the sake of such people as Marvin, who is somehow comforted by the picture of old

ladies feeding like docile rabbits on the lettuce leaves of other times, other manners. How unfair I am. Well, why not?
(3)

Typescript:

But one dissembles, usually for the sake of such people as Marvin, who is somehow comforted by the picture of old ladies feeding like docile rabbits on the lettuce leaves of other times, other manners. Marvin would have gotten along well with the detestable Whistler seeking to mummify the living. How unfair I am. Well, why not? (3)

Novel:

To him there is something distressing in the sight of Hagar Shipley, who by some mischance happens to be his mother, with a white burning tube held saucily between arthritic fingers.(3)

Typescript:

To him there is something obscene in the sight of Hagar Shipley, who by some mischance happens to be his mother, with a white burning tube held saucily between arthritic fingers.
(3)

Novel:

What do I care now what people say? I cared too long. (4)

Typescript:

What do I care now what people say? I cared too long about appearances. (3)

Novel:

It's because neither are human to the middling ones, those in their prime, as they say, like beef. (4)

Typescript:

It's because neither are human to the middling ones, the muddling ones, the only true middle classes. (4)

Novel:

My brothers took after our mother, graceful unspirited boys who tried to please him but rarely could. (5)

Typescript:

My brothers took after our mother, graceful unspirited boys who tried to please him but never could. (7)

Novel:

But when I'd heard Matt called "four eyes" at school because he had to wear glasses, and Auntie Doll scolded Dan because he'd wet his bed although he was past eight, then I knew they'd never dare, so I told. (6)

Typescript:

But when I got a little older, I'd heard Matt called "four eyes" at school because he had to wear glasses... (5)

Novel:

Have you no regard for my reputation? (6)

Typescript:

By Christ, have you no feeling for my reputation? (8)

Novel:

He used a foot ruler, and when I jerked my smarting palms back, he made me hold them out again. He looked at my dry eyes in a kind of fury, as though he'd failed unless he drew water from them. He struck and struck, and then all at once he threw the ruler down and put his arms around me. He held me so tightly I was almost smothered against the thick moth-ball-smelling roughness of his clothes. (7)

Typescript:

He used a foot ruler, and when I jerked my smarting palms back, he made me hold them out again. But I was stubborn too. I bit my tongue until it must nearly have bled. He struck and struck, and then all at once he threw the ruler down and put his arms around me. Daughter, my daughter, his voice was

strange and choked. He held me so tightly I was almost smothered against the thick moth-ball-smelling roughness of his clothes. (6)

Novel:

Telford's father wasn't very highly regarded. (8)

Typescript:

Telford's father wasn't very highly regarded. He was said to drink. (7)

Novel:

Out we all trooped, and as we went, Lottie whispered to Telford in a coy voice that made Charlotte and me double over with laughter. (10)

Typescript:

Out we all trooped, and as we went, simpering Lottie whispered to Telford in a coy voice that made Charlotte and me double over with laughter. (8)

Novel:

"You'll never get anywhere in this world unless you work harder than others, I'm here to tell you that. Nobody's going to hand you anything on a silver platter. It's up to you,

nobody else. You've got to have stick-to-iveness if you want to get ahead. You've got to use a little elbow grease." (10)

Typescript:

You needn't think otherwise. You've got to work for everything you get. I've got no use for these lazy loafers who think life's just pie, and then they wonder why they don't get anywhere. If a man doesn't get anywhere in this world, he's only got himself to blame. I didn't really listen to him at the time, and yet I can remember every word of it, and the tone in which he spoke it, like a preacher carried away by the fever of his faith. (8)

Novel:

He called me miss when he was displeased... I'd been named, hopefully, for a well-to-do spinster great-aunt in Scotland who, to my father's chagrin, had left her money to the Humane Society. (11)

Typescript:

He called me miss when he was angry...I'd been named, hopefully, for a well-to-do great aunt in Scotland who to her shame and my father's perpetual chagrin, had died intestate. (9)

Novel:

They lived in castles, too, every man jack of them, and all were gentlemen. (12)

Typescript:

They lived in castles, too, every man jack of them and not a heart but was wild and brave. (10)

Novel:

I scorned them both-him for walking here with her and speaking to her; her, because-well, simply because she was No-Name Lottie Drieser's mother. (15)

Typescript:

I despised them both..... (13)

Novel:

I thought it served her right, but I had no real reason for thinking so, except the fury children feel toward mysteries they have perceived but been unable to penetrate. (15)

Typescript:

I thought it served her right, but I had no real reason for thinking so, except the sixth sense children have and the fury they feel toward mysteries they have perceived but been unable

to penetrate. (18)

Novel:

It was Aunt Dolly who told me.(17)

Typescript:

It was Aunt Dolly who told me. She had left the telling it too late. She didn't know of course. These things are never anyone's fault. I couldn't go to Matt and beg his pardon for he had died the night before (15)

Novel:

Matt's face changed. "No, you won't he said with sudden clarity." (20)

Typescript:

Matt looked away, as though embarrassed. "No, you won't he said with sudden clarity and stubbornness." (18)

Novel:

Lottie was light as an eggshell herself, and I felt surly towards her littleness and pale fine hair, for I was tall and sturdy and dark and would have liked to be the opposite. (23)

Typescript:

Lottie was almost light as an eggshell herself and I envied her littleness.... (27)

Novel:

But they were an affront to the eyes, as well. I am less certain than I was that she did it entirely for their sake. I am not sorry now that I did not speed them. (23)

Typescript:

But they were an affront to the eyes, as well. Left alone, most would have died maybe even all. But a tenacious few might have just managed. Who's to tell or decide? I am less certain than I was that the creatures themselves had the brains or speech would have thanked her. (22)

Novel:

I am Job in reverse, and neither cascara nor syrup of figs or milk of magnesia will prevail against my unspeakable affliction. (34).

Typescript:

Let the day perish where I was born. So moaned Job in his affliction. But if he had thought for an instant that the Lord would really take him at his word, He'd have soon sung

a different tune, I'd stake my life on that. (28) (This excerpt appears twice in the typescript and is twice scored out.)

Novel:

Instead I fold my hands, as I am meant to do, over my silk lilac belly, and wait (29).

Typescript:

I fold my knobbed hands, as I am meant to do, over my silk lilac belly, and wait (28).

Novel:

"Big?" Why should I take it so keenly (30)?

Typescript:

"Big?" What do I fear? Why should I take it so keenly (35).

Novel:

"I always swore I'd never be a burden-" (31).

Typescript:

I always swore I'd never be a burden. How does one prevent

it (31)?

Novel:

I couldn't explain. Who would understand, even if I strained to speak (32)?

Typescript:

I couldn't explain. Words seem as feeble as bones. Who would understand, even if I strained to speak (32)?

Novel:

I wanted to go and talk with Matt, but I was not sure enough (43).

Typescript:

I wanted to go to Matt and speak all the things that needed speaking... I thought if he started to preach at me I couldn't bear it (32).

Novel:

I grip the table edge, and when I cease to strain for air, of itself it comes (47).

Typescript:

I grip the table edge, and when I cease to strain for air, like a eunuch for love (45).

Novel:

She stares scaredly at me, her face flushed and perspiring (48).

Typescript:

She does not say a word, not a single one. She stares scaredly ... (46).

Novel:

Yet I glance down at myself all the same, thinking she may be right, and see with surprise the great swathed hips. My waist was twenty inches when I wed (48).

Typescript:

Yet I glance down at myself all the same, thinking she may be right, and see with surprise the barrel flesh with breasts obscured. My waist was twenty inches when I wed (48).

Novel:

"Doris-I won't go there (50).

Typescript:

Oh vile, vile. The printed words have a reek stench about them, like festering weeds around a slough. "Doris-I won't go there" (47).

Novel:

I am fond of my room, and have retreated here more and more of late years (60).

Typescript:

This room is called mine, but the door remains without a lock and anyone may enter and examine, prod and smell the linen on my bed. I am fond of my room.... (63).

Novel:

And now I think he was the only person close to me who ever thought of me by my name, not daughter, not sister, nor mother, nor even wife, but Hagar, always (69).

Typescript:

And now I think he was the only person close to me who ever knew me by my name (67).

Novel:

I never spoke aloud, and I made certain that the trembling

was all inner (70).

Typescript:

I never spoke aloud, I clenched my mouth and held my muscles so that the trembling was all inner (69).

Novel:

My mouth said, "What is it?" But he did not answer (75).

Typescript:

My mouth said, "What is it?" as though I hadn't an inkling what he was pleading for. But he did not answer (72).

Novel:

I see Him clad in immaculate radiance, a short white jacket and a smile white and creamy as zinc-oxide ointment focusing His cosmic and comic glass eye on this and that, as the fancy takes Him. Or no-He's many-headed, and all the heads argue at once, a squabbling committee. But I can't concentrate... (81).

Typescript:

I see Him clad in immaculate radiance, a short white jacket and a smile white and creamy as zinc-oxide ointment focusing His cosmic and comic glass eye o this and that, as the fancy

takes Him. What if he's been laughing all these years, seeing us twitch and wriggle under His magnifying glass? Or no-He's many-headed, and all the heads argue at once, a squabbling committee. The mothering old scientist. He put us in broths and watched while we bred. Curiosity plain and simple. But I can't concentrate... (79).

Novel:

"Can they force me? If I fuss and fume... (84).

Typescript:

"Can they force me?" They are younger and stronger than I, that's what runs through my mind. If I fuss and fume...(81).

Novel:

I couldn't for the life of me see why he should care one way or another, except to have help with the farm, but as he only worked in fits and starts, anyway, even an unpaid hired man would have made precious little difference (88).

Typescript:

I couldn't for the life of me see why he should care one way or another, except to have help with the farm, but as he only worked in fits and starts, anyway, rarely finishing a thing he put his hand to, even an unpaid hired man would have

made precious little difference (86).

Novel:

It seems an impertinence to me, that these doctors should expose and peer at my giblets (96).

Typescript:

It seems an impertinence to me, that these doctors should expose and peer at my giblets, a kind of refined dissection, like hunters who think they're merciful, though they may chase their game until it's limp because they use a camera and not a gun (92).

Novel:

But when I listen to Bram spinning his cob-webs, then it would turn my stomach most of all, not what he said but that he made himself a laughingstock (101).

Typescript:

But when I'd listen to Bram spinning his cob-webs, then it would turn my stomach most of all, not what he said but that he made himself a laughingstock. "You fool no one but yourself, Bram you don't take in a soul." "So what?" he'd say. "I never meant to" (97).

Novel:

"Perhaps you didn't pray for the right things" (105).

Typescript:

His smile is subtle as an adder's. "Perhaps you didn't pray for the right things" (102).

Novel:

"What's so merciful about Him, I'd like to know?"

We regard one another from a vast distance Mr. Troy and I (106).

Typescript:

"What's so merciful about Him, I'd like to know?" What I don't say is that I believe in His infinite curiosity. He or It wants to see what'll happen if this pinch of stuff and that are put together. So we get green-fingered gardeners, red-handed murderers. He doesn't know in advance or care. We regard one another from a vast distance... (103).

Novel:

I didn't mean to mention John to Mr. Troy (107).

Typescript:

I light a cigarette and slowly puff, savouring each warm

inhalation. I didn't man to mention John ... (104).

Novel:

They washed him and weighed him and brought him to me. I took to him at once, and was surprised (108).

Typescript:

They washed him and weighed him and brought him to me wrapped in a white wool shawl I'd made having extended myself for knitting, bored to distraction. I took to him at once... (104)

Novel:

"If I was you," Bram said, "I'd hard-boil a few eggs and take them along (124).

Typescript:

He rose and yawned, scratching his belly through his gaping fly. "If I was you,".... (119).

Novel:

My mind's locked (129).

Typescript:

My mind is locked, constipated. Oh I could cry with anger

at it. It won't come (122).

Novel:

You're mean Doris. How can such meanness flourish (135).

Typescript:

You're mean Doris. you'd not give a drop of water to a person dying of thirst. Its not fair. How can such meanness... (128)?

Novel:

The windows are broken and when I look outside I see a larger building a short distance away, right beside the sea. It's been washed and warped by salt... (135).

Typescript:

The windows are broken and when I look outside I see a larger building a short distance away, right beside the sea. The light is paling but I can still see that massive shell distinctly. It's been washed and warped by salt... (129).

Novel:

I didn't care to dwell on the thought of his manhood. I suppose it reminded me of the 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 (141).

Typescript:

I didn't care to dwell on the thought of his manhood. I suppose it reminded me of the things I'd sealed away in daytime, the unacknowledged nights I'd lie sleepless even now, until I'd finally accepted the necessity of the sedative to blot away the image of Bram's heavy manhood and myself willing and trembling in beggary (134).

Novel:

I try a little, to pray, as one's meant to do at evening, thinking perhaps the knack of it will come to me here. But it works no better than it ever did (142).

Typescript:

I try a little, to pray, as one's meant to do at evening, thinking perhaps the knack of it will come to me here. But it's as much a fraud as ever and works no better than it ever did (160).

Novel:

You shake your head, say what a shame it is, and you go on

to another page, another printed and insubstantial disaster (149).

Typescript:

Thousands dying of famine on the Delhi streets. The pity of it. But you can't touch the bleak ribs nor smell death ripening in bodies far away and not your own. You shake your head.... (140).

Novel:

"Don't frown like that, angel. He's getting what he needs" (153).

Typescript:

"Don't frown like that, angel. It puckers your handsome face. Don't interfere now there's a good girl. He's getting what he needs" (144).

Novel:

The only escape from those places is feet first in a wooden box. I'll not be forced. They can go hang...(166).

Typescript:

The only escape from those places is feet first in a wooden box. I'll not be forced. People trying to push me into doing

things- that is what I dislike the most of all. They can go ... (155).

Novel:

They seemed so remote, those days (181).

Typescript:

They seemed so remote those days. I wondered what my mother had been like, and how she'd have felt if she'd lived to see Daniel marry May Spence, seven years older than he and a full head taller, and learned to fetch her Kashmir shawl if she so much as squeaked, and die at last of stomach flu, before he'd even had a son. Even my mother, wild as she was said to have been, would surely have balked at that (170).

Novel:

I hardly dared to breathe, thinking what if they discovered me lying on my Afghan cocoon like an old brown caterpillar (185)?

Typescript:

I hardly dared to breathe, thinking what if they discovered me lying on my Afghan cocoon like an old brown caterpillar that didn't even manage to spread even the common wings of some miserable cabbage butterfly (174).

Novel:

They can dump me in a ten-acre field, for all I care, and not waste a single cent on a box of flowers, nor a single breath on prayers to ferry my soul, for I'll be dead as mackerel (223).

Typescript:

Where there's no hope of heaven there's no fear of hell. They can dump me in a ten-acre field, for all I care, and not waste a single cent on a box of flowers, nor a single breath on prayers to ferry my soul, for I'll be dead as mackerel (208).

Novel:

Lord, how the world has shrunk (227).

Typescript:

So it's really time, then, is it? I don't believe it. I believe it. I know it's so. No. Lord, how the world has shrunk (227).

Novel:

He is, too. I can see it in his face (235).

Typescript:

I wish I'd been nicer to him, my stolid son. But here's the oddity-his eyes say the exact same thing. He wishes he'd been nicer to me. The whole thing is idiotic. He is, too. I can see it in his face (220).

Novel:

She just didn't know. But he didn't know, either (259).

Typescript:

She just didn't know. I'm a regular sphinx, all right, and every bit of it wasted. I should have said to Tina-You be care. Just you be careful. Watch out my girl. Take care what you say. For pity's sake don't speak in haste. But I didn't. I sent her a stone... But he didn't know either (242).

Novel:

I sigh and turn away from her (262).

Typescript:

If there's one thing in this life she detests, it's me. She'd feel much better if she came right out and said so. But she won't. That's not her way. I sigh and turn away from her. (244).

Novel:

My ribs hurt. No one knows (271).

Typescript:

Night is. Day is. But which is which. That's quite a question. If I could go somewhere else, I would. If I could find my way. If I could go now, without delay, I'd surely do it. But I don't know how. My ribs hurt. No one knows (253).

Novel:

It's in my mind to ask his pardon, but that's not what he wants from me (272).

Typescript:

It's in my mind to ask his pardon, tell him I never knew or saw, but that's not what he wants from me (254).

Novel:

All I can think is-Bless me or not, Lord, just as You please, for I'll not beg (274).

Typescript:

All I can think is-Bless me or not, Lord, just as You please, for I'll not beg. I've never done so and won't perform the last indignity of starting now (257).

Chapter Four

Dance of the Fathers: Religion and Revision

I danced in the morning when the world was begun,
 And I danced in the moon and the stars and the sun
 And I came down from heaven and I danced on the
 earth-

At Bethlehem I had my birth.
 Dance then wherever you may be;
 I am the Lord of the Dance, said he,
 I'll lead you all, wherever you may be,
 I will lead you all in the Dance, said he.

a modern hymn by Sydney Carter
 (Margaret Laurence's favourite)

Laurence, in an interview with Donna Wigmore, confessed: "I don't have a traditional religion, but I believe there's a mystery at the core of life" (Wigmore 54). Laurence said, "I don't think we can define God, but if there is a conscious will aside from man, I think it leaves us a free will. It is up to us to save the planet" (Wigmore 54). Laurence reveals to Michel Fabré that she had "always been a fairly religious person in a fairly unorthodox way" (Woodcock 197). In her memoirs, Laurence speaks of her Bible:

I have carried it around the world with me for more than fifty years. It is tattered now, and the soft black leather cover is held together with tape. It is full of pen markings, where I have noted passages I wanted to be able to find again easily. In fact, it's the only Bible in which I can find anything.
 (11,12)

Such a reference to her Bible suggests that she referred to it often as a source of comfort and wisdom. The pen markings intimate that Laurence was engaging in a dialogue with God or at least with the text. Writing in the margins is in itself a subversive and telling exercise. While such an activity suggests a revisionary tack, the religious inclusions in the typescript do not suggest that Laurence had any inclination towards deconstructing organized religion; rather, she points out the inefficacy of those who represent the institutional church. She purposefully and respectfully does not alter God's gender and without exception (in the typescript and novel) capitalizes God and all references to him. In so doing, she shows a deliberate reverence and places considerable value on Christianity.

While Laurence challenges the epistemology of structured religion in her queries contained in the typescript, she deletes such scepticism from her novel. In her address to a graduating class of ministers, she says:

I feel the need of something solid to lean on, physically, but also the need-not just now but every day-of something spiritual to lean on. This sustaining force is faith" (Woodcock 56).

Hagar Shipley, throughout the novel, needs a similar support and is only able to arrive at a sense of survival once she has gleaned the spiritual lean-to from Mr. Troy's song. Hagar,

according to the typescript, considers going to Matt for a support of sorts. The finished novel tells us that Hagar does not go, but it does not tell us why. In the typescript, however, Hagar offers a clue: "I wanted to go to Matt and speak all the things that needed speaking...I thought if he started to preach at me I couldn't bear it" (ts 32). George Addison, the minister of the Lakefield United Church (which Laurence attended until her death), during an address on July 30, 1995 spoke of Margaret's "edginess towards religion." He noted that her struggle was against the institution of religion and not religion itself. Addison pointed out that Laurence had felt that many organized religions held to the tenet that women were not 'good enough' and that these representatives were, in Margaret's view, symbols of judgment and self-righteousness. Interestingly, during a revisionist story-telling at this same service, several parishioners got up and left the church in indignation. Such were the constraints that informed Laurence's personal and political life.

Margaret Laurence confirmed that religion meant an enormous amount to her. In a letter to William Ready, dated March 17, 1977, she says:

I have begun to go back, Will, to the church of my people, which is the United Church (my folks long ago were of course Presbyterians, but joined church union with those parts of the Methodist church which went along with the concept). I wanted to do this for about

two years here, and felt-it sounds odd, but it's true-shy. I finally did make it, and felt as though I had come back home, again, in yet another way. Well, life is strange and sometimes wonderful.

Laurence was active as a church parishioner. She donated generously to Lakefield United Church, providing them with new, comfortable chairs for their reading room and a number of books, including some written by her. How appropriate! Only Margaret would link comfort, religion and literature--again the private and public.

She certainly demonstrates a respect and a comfortable familiarity with the biblical stories in anchoring her own novels with biblical underpinnings. In addition, by telling her stories through the voices of strong women, Hagar, Rachel, and Morag (Celtic for Mary) she begins to set the stage for a more women-centred spirituality. In Dance on the Earth, Laurence tells of her dream for a more women-centred spirituality:

Women have been intentionally excluded from so many of the rituals and practices and words of Christianity, and the same is true of the other monotheisms. I believe this exclusion cannot go on. it is precisely because of our memories of some of our "mothers in distress" - our foremothers who laboured and suffered and did without in order that their children and their children's children might be brought into life and cared for - as well as our own sense of worth as women that so many of us now, both inside the churches and outside, feel that the recognition of the female principle in faith, in art, in all of life must come about much more fully than it has done. (15)

The typescript of The Stone Angel contains a considerable number of religious entries which Laurence decided had no place in the completed version. Irreverent profanities such as "god-damned and "By Christ" are erased (ts 30,5). One particular section, referring to Job, actually occurs twice and is twice deleted. "Let the day perish where I was born. So moaned Job in his affliction. But if he had thought for an instant that the Lord would really take him at his word, he'd have sung a different tune, I'd stake my life on that" (ts 28,30). Laurence poses an important proposition here about the epistemology of patience, but after twice contemplating the inclusion, ultimately deletes the entire section.

Hagar refers to God as "the mothering old scientist... [who] puts us in broth and watched while we bred. Curiosity plain and simple" (ts 79). From a religious perspective, such entries are blasphemous. But given Hagar's lack of mothering, both in terms of her own mother and in terms of her relationship with her birth children, such a reference to mothering is interesting. Certainly, placing God in the role of mother blurs gender divisions and invites a more holistic relationship. At the same time, the notion of God as a scientist experimenting with his progeny is disturbing, most particularly when juxtaposed with the image of a mother. Such a juxtaposition purposefully conveys a concise commentary on

God and his relationship with his people. Clearly a hierarchical power structure is suggested which precludes the image of a caring shepherd and its attendant ideology. Laurence's decision to delete this section may in part have been a compromise--an effort not to offend her reading audience. In addition, her editing may well reflect some ambivalence about her own participation in organized religion.

Earlier in the typescript draft, Doris's friendly preacher is described as having a "smile as subtle as an adder's" (ts 102). Such a reference conjures up a number of biblical connections with snakes. In a novel steeped in biblical underpinnings, the trope of a snake tempting a woman is not surprising. Less obvious, though, is the motivation for the tempting. An adder links religion as represented by Mr. Troy to that which is threatening, menacing, sinister and not to be trusted. Such a comparison would suggest that Laurence is evoking a specific judgment on the Church. Moreover, Laurence subverts tradition by representing a minister, God's spokesperson, as an evil snake, thus suggesting that the construction of duality in terms of good and evil needs to be questioned.

At the novel's end, Mr. Troy is no longer compared to an adder. In fact, even his voice has undergone a metamorphosis; his voice is no longer "plain" but is now "firm" (ts 244, 291). The import of such a change may relate

to Mr. Troy's ability to finally reach Hagar. Once he removes his veil of pomposity and sings, he becomes considerably more impressive, more resolute and more human. Such a transcendence invites a critique of institutionalized religion. Perhaps the inability of the Church to soothe the lives of the suffering calls to mind the inaccessibility of a hierarchical institution. Once the rituals are relaxed and the joy of song is returned to, the connection becomes more meaningful. In song, he has returned to a vital ritual. One wonders if the initial failing of Mr. Troy doesn't reflect the failings of the minister who came to console Laurence and her Mum at the time of her father's death (Dance 56).

Hagar, whose name means "flight," is without question the archetypal woman, Agar, of the Old Testament. Although she finds herself in quite different circumstances from those of her biblical namesake Agar, Hagar is very much defined by her maternity. In addition, Hagar, much like Agar, spends her life in a quest for freedom. For both, the quests are spatial and symbolic. While Agar is more literally cast out, Hagar's "wilderness is within" (Woodcock 198). Agar returns to Sara and Abraham because God tells her to. Hagar returns to Bram of her own volition.

By evoking this biblical connection, Laurence has given Hagar, indeed all women, great esteem because Agar is the first person in the Old Testament to whom God speaks directly.

In addition, God alters Agar's status from spurned to blessed by reminding Agar that her son Ishmael would be a great leader. Hagar's story becomes in part a re-telling of Agar's ancient tale.

Patricia Morley suggests that "Laurence humanizes the religious myth, freeing it from its specifically Christian implications," making The Stone Angel "an analogue for the journey of the human spirit out of the bondage of pride, which isolates, into the freedom of love, which links the lover to other humans" (Morley 79). In a biblical syntax, Hagar asserts:

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

Yet it is Hagar's pride which imbues her with the courage and fortitude which preclude her victimization. Indeed, Marvin confirms the resemblance of Hagar to her biblical namesake when he asserts that "She's a holy terror" (272). The anger with which the words are spoken would call to mind the Old Testament faith, but Marvin also speaks with "such tenderness" (272). The import of setting up such a duality may well be Laurence's vision of a more woman-centred spirituality. In addition, the notion of pride as her greatest enemy is cast in a new light when one regards her pride as the impetus for her salvation. Agar is a concubine

given to Abraham by Pharaoh as a gift, a commodity. Similarly, Hagar is denied subjectivity in that she, for all purposes, is Jason Currie's property. Her state is not radically altered as Bram's wife, a period of twenty four years of servitude. Nor is there any freedom when she becomes a uniformed servant for Mr. Oatley. Agar ultimately finds salvation with strangers, a tribe of nomads. Hagar's redemption begins with the stranger, Murray Lees, and culminates in a community of strangers in the hospital. While one could consider Margaret Laurence a revisionist storyteller, in fact, The Stone Angel is not all that different from the biblical tale.

In another religious vein, predestination is queried when Hagar affirms: "What I don't say is that I believe in his infinite curiosity. He or It wants to see what'll happen, if this pinch of stuff and that are put together. So we get green-fingered gardeners, red-handed murderers. He doesn't know in advance or care" (ts 103). By juxtaposing the gardener who nurtures and promotes life and the murderer who takes life, the fragility of human existence is made explicit. In addition, the typescript suggests that we, as humans, have little control over our destiny. Rather, humanity is serendipitously governed by a God who neither brings foreknowledge nor really cares much one way or the other. Less overt is the life-affirming 'green-fingered gardener' as

a celebration of pregnancy. Laurence's use of 'green,' the colour which suggests life and nurturance, is an affirmation of reproduction, women's realm. The gardener gently and lovingly caring for his garden is a compelling metaphor. Moreover, it is in keeping with Laurence's ecological concerns for a sustainable earth. Such an affirmation, unfortunately, remains hidden from the text. The conclusion of the typescript entry submits that God is neither omniscient nor caring. Laurence edited out this impiety.

Hagar moralizes, "Where there's no hope of heaven, there's no fear of hell" (ts 208). We are reminded in the typescript that "praying is as much a fraud as ever and works no better than it ever did" (160). Hagar, in a posture of defiance, asserts that begging God's forgiveness would be "the last indignity" (ts 257). Hagar asks, "What if he's been laughing all these years, seeing us twitch and wriggle under His magnifying glass?" (ts 77) Such theological questioning is acceptable for generations of male writers dating back to Alfred Lord Tennyson, yet Laurence did not include it in her finished text.

Margaret faced a major personal, religious dilemma. While spirituality was profoundly important to her, she could not accept the rigorous parameters of the institutionalized Church. Yet neither could she reject the Church. Her dream for a more female-centred spirituality was not part of her

reality in Lakefield. In her memoirs, Laurence concedes:

It has become more and more important to me to recognize the female principle as part of the Holy Spirit. This may seem unconnected with the subject of these memoirs - my mothers and foremothers, and myself as child and mother - but there is a deep connection. I am a Christian... (Dance 13)

Perhaps we should consider the intimate union of religion and motherhood in The Stone Angel, Laurence's prescription for change.

Chapter Five

Sex, Motherhood and Death (Not necessarily in that order)

I once told Alan Maclean that I'd always thought if I were on my own, I would spend all my spare time thinking about sex, and it had turned out that I spent all my spare time worrying about money.

(Dance on the Earth 171)

Issues of sex, motherhood and death appear more frequently in the typescript of The Stone Angel than in the finished text. Clearly, all three occupied much of Margaret's life for she talks at length about them in her memoirs. Yet, all three are only tangentially written about in the novel. In part, Laurence's censorship was informed by societal constraints; in part the censorship imparts the self-imposed restraint of a private woman.

The typescript of The Stone Angel reveals a play with upper case and lower case in the word "death." In the typescript "death" (along with the word "mother") is in lower case, but in the novel it appears in upper case. Death, then becomes personified as it becomes a physical presence or at least a physical reality for Hagar. Laurence admitted that her writing was most affected by "the number of deaths in [her] family" and perhaps Laurence, herself, internalized a similar anxiety as she coped with the constant fear of her own creative death (Hind-Smith 9). Undoubtedly, the issues of

death (creative) and motherhood were overwhelming personal pre-occupations for Laurence; they remain paramount in the novel.

Laurence insisted that The Stone Angel was not autobiographical. Indeed, Laurence was not a ninety year old woman. Yet the typescript bears witness to a fear of getting older. Such an anxiety is hinted at early in the typescript with two references to getting "a little older" (ts 5,8). Hagar worries: "How does one prevent being a burden" (ts 31). Such references to physical death are in keeping with the novel's themes. Yet they bear significantly more import when one considers Laurence's return to this theme in her last work The Diviners. The surfacing of such uncertainties in the typescripts reveals a personal insecurity; their lack of placement in the novel reveals Laurence's decision not to share her private thoughts with her readers.

Creative death is also implied in such references as: "Words seem as feeble as bones" and "Oh vile,vile. The printed words have a reek stench about them, like festering weeds around a slough" (ts 32,47). These misgivings are not represented in the novel. We know they remained with Laurence, for she explicitly returns to them again in the completion of the Manawaka cycle, The Diviners, the work that seems to have marked her loss of word divining. The fear of creative death for Laurence was present throughout much of her

writing career.

Much of the novel focuses on Hagar's lack of mothering as a child and the profound ways such a lack impacts on her inability to communicate and her incapacity to love. Indeed, her salvation comes about only when she is able to becoming the ministering, kind sort of person that her mother was. Only when Hagar's more tender virtues are developed is she able to communicate. Laurence, as a revisionist storyteller, shows her audience what happens to women who reject the feminine qualities of caring, emotionality, and mothering. Mothering is represented by the 'mother words', 'there, there.' The culmination of this concern with nurturing occurs at the novel's end when Hagar holds the water in her own hands and utters "There. There," finally mothering herself (275). These words have been uttered before in the text but never with such certainty and confidence. Once she thought these words but couldn't bring herself to say them to Bram (75). Another time they are a source of comfort when she is trying to remember the name 'Shadow Point,' and yet again when she applauds herself for standing alone and erect while in the woods.(129,170) The final catharsis, then, signals a movement from the external in the person of Bram to the internal.

Laurence recalls that at the time of The Stone Angel's writing, "women writers had virtually no models in describing birth, or sex, from a woman's view"; she adds "I not only

didn't have the courage to describe these crucial experiences; it didn't even occur to me to do so" (Dance 6). Yet the typescripts bear proof that it did occur to Margaret to describe these events. Her reticence to address the personal, private topics of motherhood and sex becomes more understandable, given the time frame in which she was writing.

The typescript reference to God as a "mothering old scientist" casts mothers in an arresting paradigm. Such a comparison suggests that mothers are self-serving, self-absorbed and indifferent. Similar deletions which suggest particular heresies regarding motherhood are also apparent in typescripts of other Laurence works, so it is clear that the conflict of identity between being a woman, a wife, and a mother occupied Laurence's imagination. For example, later, The Fire-Dwellers's typescripts reveals Stacey as a mother who asserts the dilemma of motherhood when she says "I feel sort of trapped and like nobody saw me anymore" (ts 9). She also describes herself as a "monster" who "wants to go away by herself" and doesn't "want not be a good wife and mother" (ts 14,8,174). The connection between motherhood, sex and liberation is most apparent in Laurence's A Jest of God which portrays a manipulating mother and her control over her virginal, middle-aged daughter.

Motherhood is sanctioned in The Stone Angel when we realize that Hagar's salvation is her eventual ability to

"mother." Hagar has no female role model, and partially because of this lack she is unable to mother Dan when he is dying. In my view, Hagar resists wearing the shawl because she refuses, even momentarily, to relinquish that which she perceives to be her identity. She confuses tenderness with weakness. (One wonders if receiving the talismanic shawl before her wedding would have changed Hagar.) Her identity, of course, is informed by Jason Currie's values which equate emotion, the feminine and weakness. Still unable to express any gentleness and warmth, Hagar as mother to her own children is ambiguous as she vacillates between indifference in her interactions with Marvin and obsession in her relationship with John. In this way, motherhood is represented as paradoxical. The unsayable blasphemies against motherhood voiced in the typescript are silent in the novel. Laurence is constrained once again by her deference to a reading audience.

"Mother," because Laurence always capitalizes it in the novel (not so in the typescript), becomes elevated to the same position of authority as God and father. Since Jason Currie is referred to as a God-like figure throughout the novel, such a similar positing of the mother is, in some senses, a reclamation of power. The institution of motherhood throughout the novel, however, remains ambiguous. Hagar's own mother is portrayed as weak--hence the deletion of the typescript entry which casts her as "wild as she was said to

have been" (ts 170). The notion of a "wild" mother may well have been abandoned in deference to Laurence's audience, although, to my mind, it is equally important for narrative continuity that Hagar's mother be cast as feeble and weak since Hagar is portrayed as a conscious contradiction to her mother.

Hagar, during most of her adult life is in control, and Laurence has imbued her character with the qualities of fortitude, endurance, and strength. Such qualities were not often seen as female values at the time of The Stone Angel's writing. Conversely, Laurence also demonstrates the results of women adopting a male posture of control, resolution and divorcing themselves from emotion. Hagar has learned to master her emotions and passions. Even in her intensely intimate moments with Bram, she keeps her pleasure secret. Hagar admits: "The night my son died, I was transformed to stone and never wept at all" (216). As a result of denying her feminine side for so many years, Hagar has allowed herself to be integrated with the male traits of dispassion and disengagement. It is these male, "Jason Currie" characteristics that cause Hagar's dispossession. In a tender moment in the typescript, Jason Currie shows some remorse for having struck Hagar. In an emotional outpouring, he cries: "Daughter, my daughter, his voice was strange and choked" (ts 6). Such warmth is deleted from the novel for precisely the

same contradictory reasons as noted above. Compassion and sensitivity are not qualities Laurence wants to associate with Jason Currie.

Such nurturing qualities have historically been part of the feminine. Helene Cixous offers a compelling portrait of woman as writer (as nurturer) which aptly describes Laurence:

She is giving birth. With the strength of a lioness. Of a plant. Of a cosmogony. Of a woman...A desire for text! Confusion! What possesses her? A child! Paper! Intoxications! I'm overflowing! My breasts overflow! Milk. Ink. The moment of suckling. And I? I too am hungry. The taste of milk, of ink! (Cixous 1977, 37)

Cixous's metaphor of maternity clearly links mothering and writing. For women, I would argue writing, giving birth to a text, is a radically different process than it is for men. Laurence, in addition to affirming the birth of a new kind of writing, extended nurturing in more than one traditional sense. She was described by all who knew her as a good mother. Her children were immensely important to her. Laurence testifies that her "children were more important than any sexual relationship could ever be" (Dance 170). Yet her mothering extended beyond the simplistic paradigm of progeny.

While in England, she mothered many Canadian writers with whom she came into contact. She was always the encouraging, supportive mentor. On her return to Canada, Laurence became engrossed in giving birth to the Writers's Union. At the "Remembering Margaret" literary commemoration in

Lakefield in 1995, Penny Dixon, executive secretary of the now-flourishing Writers's Union, tells how "Margaret nurtured the Union as a mother does her child. The Writers became her children and as their mother she was constantly breaking up squabbles and cautioning for solidarity." Indeed, Margaret refers to the members of the Writers's Union repeatedly in correspondence and in her memoirs, as her tribe. Brenda Neill, a teacher and Lakefield friend, tells of numerous occasions when Laurence attended her Grade Four/Five class to read to the children and answer their questions. She says: "The children wrote to the Peterborough Examiner in defence of 'their Margaret' during the censorship controversy" (Interview). Budge Wilson confirms this sense of mothering when he applauds Laurence for having "a strong sense of community and [he adds] she was very willing to speak to schools...She was a real nurturer of young talent, new talent" (Wainwright 215).

Margaret Laurence also played an important role in mothering our planet. In the words of Budge Wilson, she was intent on "keeping the world from destroying itself...-that is to say, if someone asked her to come and talk about 'the bomb' and she was in the middle of a chapter she would go and talk about 'the bomb' (Wainwright 215). Her strong commitment to ecology, nuclear disarmament, and saving the planet is explicit in her membership in many assemblies, committees,

probes and in the numerous articles of admonition and support she wrote. Her mothering umbrella is, perhaps, most obvious in her Foreword to Canada and the Nuclear Arms Race. She says:

If we will not speak out for our children, and their children and their children's children, if we will not speak out for the survival of our own land and our wider home Earth, in God's name what will move us? May our hearts be touched, our minds opened, our voices raised.

She talks at great length in her autobiography about the importance and value of her own mothers and motherhood in general. There is a significant link between oppression, mothers and religion both in The Stone Angel and in Margaret's life. Laurence's birth mother and stepmother were fathered by a stern, unyielding man incapable of expressing any emotion but anger, a man strongly reminiscent of Jason Currie. Laurence gives a more specific account of living with such a man in A Bird in the House. Laurence's third mother, her mother-in-law, was the daughter of an English parson. All the families firmly resided in society's middle class. In the novel, Laurence deletes the phrase "The muddling ones, the only true middle class," simultaneously deleting suggestions about motherhood which may offend the middle class reading her novels (ts 4). Such a deletion also reflects Laurence's reticence to describe the middle class as "muddlers" (bumblers).

As well as a commentary on motherhood, in the typescript Laurence exposes the systemic sexual repression of women which has been institutionalized and authorized by society. In The Stone Angel, Hagar internalizes a sense of pride in making "certain that her trembling was all inner" (81). Orgasms were neither spoken of (by women) nor deemed to be part of the female experience at the time of the novel's writing. Laurence shatters one part of this myth and authorizes the other. Hagar enjoys sex. In the typescript, it is referred to as "that fearful joy I held within myself" (ts 68). Such a celebratory acknowledgment is deleted from the novel. Nonetheless, the reader is aware of Hagar's pleasure. The reader is also aware, however, of Hagar's resolution to "never let him know" (81).

The image of Hagar "willing and trembling in beggary" is deleted from the text (ts 134). Deprived of physical intimacy, Hagar refers to herself as "a eunuch for love" (ts 45). She tenderly remembers "Bram's heavy manhood" in the typescript but forgets it in the novel (ts 160). Such a censorship reflects societal constraints. Women could participate in sex and even write about it, but were not authorized to enjoy it. To savour sex would for Hagar (insert women) be a betrayal of dignity. Such was not the rule for men. Mordecai Richler's St. Urbain's Horseman, published just seven years later, repeatedly refers to sexual intercourse,

oral sex, and orgies. Richler was never criticized for such inclusion; rather, he received the Governor General's award. This suggests a double standard based on an author's gender.

Regina Weese is an illustration of what happens to those women who don't engage in sexual intercourse. She dies from some "obscure and maidenly disorder caused", according to the typescript, "no doubt by her unused womanhood" and is said to be sighing in heaven as a virginal idiot (ts 2). The suggestion that one could die from idiotically remaining virginal is deleted from the text. The inclusion could have been quite thought-provoking; Laurence couldn't take such a risk. In addition, Hagar's recollection in the text that "His banner over me was only his own skin, and now I no longer know why it should have shamed me" calls into question an intimate connection between Christianity and sexual prudery (70). Such an inclusion indeed comments on the oppressive nature of Judaeo-Christian tradition; this critique is supported when Hagar refuses to hold her dying brother and wear the shawl; in rejecting the role model of a Madonna, Hagar, in a sense, rejects women's position in Christianity.

In addition, Laurence holds up a mirror to reflect society's gender divisions. Clearly, the sexual experience is part of this image, as is the private/public division which defines life in Manawaka. Hagar moves out of the public sphere of the Currie store to the private sphere of the

Shipley farm and then back into the public sphere of the city in her relocation at Mr. Oatley's. For Hagar, as for all women, there is a constant "bleeding" of the private into the public. By that I mean, she is not allowed to disengage from the private at Mr. Oatley's because she is a domestic. In addition, she is a mother and as such is never able to separate fully from the domestic sphere. However, Hagar does consciously make difficult decisions and, in controlling her life, offers women permission to alter their destiny. She reminisces on a life of decisions, the repercussions of which have both empowered and disempowered her. Her self-engagement and self-blaming are typically part of a feminine discourse. By embedding this discourse into the text, Laurence validates women's experience; she also exposes the ramifications of internalizing blame when circumstances remove most alternate choices.

Gender oppression is given a compelling treatment in the discourse involving Hagar's mother. Readers are never told her name. She is neither given voice nor an identity beyond her identification as Jason Currie's "brood mare" (37). As such, she mothers Hagar who is described as a "dark-maned colt" (36). Both references reinforce the notion of ownership, property. In the novel, Hagar refers to herself as "a dray horse" who becomes "an old mare, a slow old sway-back" (98,26). The novel also overtly questions the notion of

tending--"as though I were a crop, a cash crop" (4). Readers are invited to query the outcome of such oppression. What happens to women like Hagar's mother who live primarily to please? (51) Laurence answers the question. They die.

In a quest for a better life, Hagar first leaves her father and then leaves her husband. Laurence herself undertook the same quest. For Laurence the pursuit was informed by doubt and guilt. Her decision to follow a vocation of writing, at the price of her marriage, amidst a family and community offering no support and much hostility, was a wrenching one. Despite such insecurity and indecision, Laurence left her husband, her community, and her extended family. But she took her children with her. In her memoirs, she says children are "the core of our lives" (Dance 135). Motherhood was her sustenance. Her priorities were constant and clear: "the kids and the work, the work and the kids" (Dance 171). The reverence of motherhood present in Margaret's life is equally present in The Stone Angel.

Conclusion

Motto for the day: SCREW ALL REVIEWS.

(In a letter from Margaret Laurence to
Timothy Findley, 26 October 70)

Laurence's commitment to write in a different way, a distinctly feminine way, was compromised by her obvious desire and economic need to have her work published. In numerous correspondence with her publisher, Jack McLelland, Laurence repeatedly refers to her need for money. As a single parent, her sole source of income was her writing. Her dread of losing her wordcrafting, then, was quite understandable. Moreover, she was a serious writer. Her writing reflected her identity, who she was. Unfortunately Laurence, as well as being constantly pre-occupied with not having enough money, was worried that the critics wouldn't like her work. To a great degree the financial nature of her life was in her control provided she was prepared to compromise. She had to please the publishers and her readers. Perhaps the typescript comment, deleted from the text, "People trying to push me into doing things-that's what I hate most of all" (ts 155) should read "People trying to push Laurence into doing things - that's what she hated most of all." Laurence was greatly constrained as she balanced her own integrity as an author with a desire not to alienate her readers.

Laurence acknowledges that she "had been brought up in a society in which jobs such as washing the dishes, making the beds, and scrubbing floors were valuable work for women; writing was not" (Dance 170). Margaret Atwood suggests that if you want to appreciate the constraints that Laurence faced as an artist:

Go back and read the biographies of women writers that were around during the first fifty years of this century. Because I got the same mythology, and it was: they all die young, never get married, live in closets, like Emily Dickinson; they look at life through the wormholes in a shroud. It was built into the idea of being a woman and a writer. It wasn't just Margaret. She was picking up on something that was very much there. And I think we all did, under a certain age, because the only role models that we had for women who were writers and did get married and did all that were Mrs. Gaskell and Harriet Beecher Stowe. Everybody else had an anomalous life.

(Wainwright 5)

In her memoirs Laurence warns that "Writing by women...was generally regarded by critics and reviewers in this country with at best an amused tolerance, at worst a dismissive shrug" (5). Laurence was living proof that gender oppression was alive and well in the literary community. In her university days, she submitted her first poems for publication under the name Steve Lancaster. Laurence recalls: "Later, I dared to use my own name, but it was J.M. Wemyss" (Dance 5).

For Canadian women of Laurence's generation, the writing experience was usually squeezed in early in the morning or late at night in short, fragmented spots of time.

Despite such obvious gender oppression, Laurence's The Stone Angel celebrates the female. The novel exposes a tyranny of gender and reflects the lives of all the Hagar's in our past, all the Hagar's of our present.

Elizabeth Potvin maintains: "If Hagar is Everywoman, she is apparently a woman on trial for her crimes against men" (27). Such a notion is supported in the text with the finding of the partial scale at the cannery. The "weights are lost," offering no balance to either side (136). The scales become an image representing injustices in both the private and public spheres. Laurence closes her memoirs with an invocation—not to God, but to women. She prays: "I hope for a greater balance in the future....To women in the future, I have to say: My Hope Is Constant In Thee" (238). Margaret offers a very traditional blessing in a non-traditional way.

There is immense power in tradition. Laurence confesses that she was "thoroughly...brainwashed by society" into accepting patriarchy (Dance 5). Such a telling confession sheds light on the societal constraints under which women write and in part explains Margaret's self-censorship.

It follows then that one can only applaud Laurence's iconoclasm as she revises the tradition of storytelling, altering biblical tradition in a holistic and feminist process.

The last two words of the narrative, "And then—" mirror

human fragility, instability and uncertainty (275). The reference to such insecurity is not gendered but inclusive-universal. However, Laurence closes the novel with the image of water, a symbol for rebirth. Such an image is often associated with the religious rites of communion and baptism but water is also a feminine trope. Hence, the novel illustrates that, for Hagar, there is an inseparable connection between spiritual and physical liberation. Whether this reflects a Christian ideology or a feminist ideology is not resolved. However, the consequence of peace, comfort and salvation is. Laurence has left us with an image of a timeless Hagar who demands respect by virtue of her achievement of vision, human suffering, and ability to reach out in a gesture of self-understanding, self-realization and love. This accomplishment is possible only through a fusion of the private and public, the male and female.

In a letter to Hugh MacLennan, Margaret anguishes: "Writing is a private work-when it is in the public eye, so to speak, one is glad but also a bit bewildered" (Wainwright 35). Helene Cixous's écriture féminine demands that women must go public and write with a difference. The Stone Angel accomplishes this and Laurence knew it. Margaret Laurence repeatedly told people, "If you want to get to know me, read my books." I would say, "If you really want to know Margaret, read her typescripts."

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