

JACOB AND THE ANGEL : A STUDY OF BIBLICAL
INFLUENCES IN THE WORK OF MARGARET LAURENCE

by

MIRIAM ANN LANCASTER

B.A., University of British Columbia, 1963

A.R.C.T., Royal Conservatory of Music of Toronto, 1966

A THESIS SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT
OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF

MASTER OF ARTS

in the Department

of

English DATE

ACCEPTED
FACULTY OF GRADUATE STUDIES

We accept this thesis as conforming
to the required standard

© MIRIAM ANN LANCASTER, 1976
UNIVERSITY OF VICTORIA
August 1976

*All rights reserved. This thesis may not be reproduced in whole
or in part, by mimeograph or other means, without the permission
of the author.*

ABSTRACT

Supervisor: Dr. Rosemary Sullivan

Margaret Laurence's admiration for human vitality is expressed in her writing as the growth of the human spirit towards self-knowledge and freedom. The theme of freedom in her early works assumes a national significance as she was living in Africa at a time when several colonies were actively seeking independence. ✓She was also involved with a rediscovery of the Bible and found a natural correlation between the Africans and the Israelites. Her first novel, *This Side Jordan*, uses the Exodus as its controlling metaphor in Nathaniel Amegbe's emergence from colonial Africa, a contemporary parallel to Joshua's progression towards the Promised Land.

The decision to structure her writing on the simple but powerful foundation of Biblical myth carries over into her Canadian fiction. Though the theme of freedom continues, the political implications are replaced by an emphasis on survival. Now the mythic framework is used to enhance her study of women in quest of the self-knowledge that will allow them to escape from the bondage of the past in the prairie town of Manawaka that is their common heritage and, more important, from their personal bondage of pride, fear or despair.

Hagar in *A Stone Angel* and Rachel in *A Jest of God* share the experiences of their archetypes in Genesis while Stacey in *The Fire-Dwellers* is surrounded with New Testament images of destruction from the book of Revelation. In her latest novel, *The Diviners*, Morag's symbolic goal of freedom is not the Old Testament's Promised Land but Jerusalem, the heavenly city in the New Testament.

The Bible is as much a part of Margaret Laurence's heritage as the town of Manawaka. Here is her description of her approach to this source.

I suppose that the biblical references and allusions come into most of my work quite naturally, because, although I can't quote chapter and verse, and have to refer to the verses which hover in my mind, it has always seemed to me that my own frame of reference was very much a Christian heritage. *

The purpose of this study is to examine the ways in which Mrs. Laurence uses the Bible and to discover how her allusions function in terms of themes, structure and characterization. Her concept of historical time also springs from a Biblical matrix as the span of time present in her stories represents not only the character's own life and memory but also everything acquired and passed on from one generation to another.

As a humanist, Mrs. Laurence is concerned with the process through which human potential is realized. As a Christian by

*Margaret Laurence, Letter to M. Lancaster, 11 April 1976.

inheritance, she describes this process in terms of her
ancestral roots of received religion.

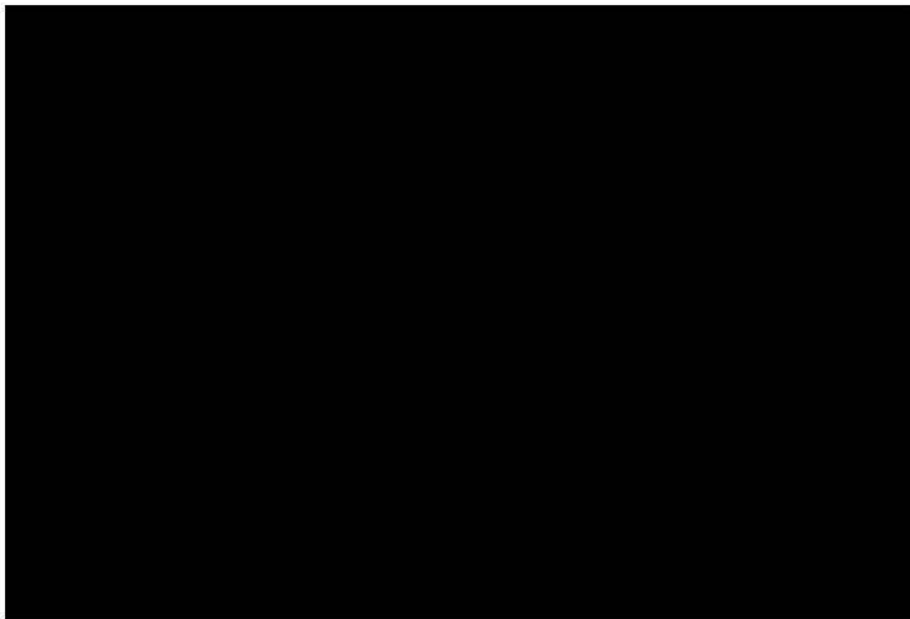


TABLE OF CONTENTS

<i>Introduction</i>		1
<i>Chapter One</i>	THE EARLY WORKS: ALIENATION AND EXILE	11
<i>Chapter Two</i>	THE SHORT STORIES: FREEDOM ACHIEVED	25
<i>Chapter Three</i>	SURVIVAL IN MANAWAKA:	
	I <i>The Stone Angel</i>	*44
	II <i>A Jest of God</i>	61
	III <i>The Fire-Dwellers</i>	78
<i>Chapter Four</i>	THE DIVINERS: A WRITER'S PILGRIMAGE	93
<i>Epilogue</i>		112
<i>Bibliography</i>		115
<i>Chronology</i>		130

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I wish to express my gratitude to three members of the English Department at the University of Victoria whose teaching and encouragement are largely responsible for my interest in Canadian literature: Robert Lawrence, Dorothy Livesay and, in particular, Rosemary Sullivan.

Also I wish to thank Muriel Laurence Peterson and her mother, Elsie Fry Laurence, who kindly provided me with letters and newspaper clippings concerning Margaret Laurence.

M.L.

To John and Jordan

Introduction

--It is a curious thing, do you know,
Cranly said, dispassionately, how your
mind is supersaturated with the religion
in which you say you disbelieve.

James Joyce

Visitors to the church of St. Sulpice on Paris' Left Bank are drawn there more by the mural decorations within than by the imposing classical building which houses them. The reason is found on the walls and ceiling of the Chapel of the Holy Angels where three large frescoes represent the last and greatest work of Eugène Delacroix. The most outstanding of the murals is said to be 'Jacob wrestling with the Angel.' Although not a Christian, Delacroix was the only great religious painter of the nineteenth century. Inspired by the Old Testament story of the confrontation between Jacob and a mysterious stranger at Peniel, he placed the combatants

in the shadow of great oaks, symbols of his primitive nature, [where] man has struggled all night to resist that gift of spiritual perception that will so greatly sadden and complicate his existence; he charges like a bull against the impassive angel; but in the end he must succumb to his destiny. 1

Delacroix's comment on this event in Genesis² was 'It is a trial that God sends to his chosen ones.' For him "the struggle sym-

bolized the long-awaited battle, the struggle with a mystery which leads a man to leave the road that has been marked out for him."³

This story has also captured the imagination of Margaret Laurence, who has included it in almost everything she has written. Her varied treatment of this reference is typical of the way she uses the Bible -- sometimes only in passing, such as a simile for prairie farmers in *The Diviners*,⁴ and other times as the organizing metaphor of an entire novel, such as *The Stone Angel*. Delacroix's perception of this epic struggle can well apply to Mrs. Laurence's central characters as each in turn takes part in a symbolic encounter and emerges with a new purpose and direction in life.

As her characters follow a road which leads ultimately to self-knowledge, Margaret Laurence frames their travels in the context of the archetypal Biblical journey which led in the Old Testament to the Promised Land and the holy city of Jerusalem and in the New Testament was extended as the pilgrimage to the heavenly Jerusalem. The recurrent metaphors of Jacob and the Angel and 'Jerusalem the golden' thus provide the essential paradigms for her fiction as a whole.

Canadian literature's debt to scripture and religion does not, however, rest uniquely with Margaret Laurence. Northrop Frye states that

Religion has been a major -- perhaps the major -- cultural force in Canada, at least

down to the last generation or two. The churches not only influenced the cultural climate but took an active part in the production of poetry and fiction, as the popularity of Ralph Connor reminds us. 5

What does distinguish Mrs. Laurence from her colleagues is that her knowledge of the Bible is a product of her own discovery without benefit of the stimulus of religious practices such as the Jewish heritage of Adele Wiseman or the Mennonite background of Rudy Wiebe. She was not enlightened by contact with theologians as were Morley Callaghan and Gabrielle Roy, both Roman Catholics whose faith was strengthened and writing influenced by Jacques Maritain and Pierre Teilhard de Chardin, respectively.

Her religious impulses were initiated by her family.

Our family was Scottish-Presbyterian and we absorbed our religion more in the moral terms than theological.... The virtuous person is he who works hard and so on. I guess I'm a religious agnostic. I have some kind of faith, but not with a traditional church. But I value the myths and rituals of religion. I think they're necessary and reassuring to the human spirit. 6

A practical application of the value of these myths is her use of them in the Frye sense of myth as "ultimately *mythos*, a structural organizing principle of literary form."⁷ In addition, she shares a Biblical approach to the question of time. Margaret Laurence feels that the most important considerations in writing fiction are the treatment of time and the handling of the narrative voice. Time to her means historical time. As she explains,

In any work of fiction, the span of time present in the story is not only as

long as the time-span of every character's life and memory; it also represents everything acquired and passed on in a kind of memory-heritage from one generation to another. 8

Similarly, historical time for the Hebrews was based on the covenant between God and his chosen people, established first with Abraham but also reaffirmed with each successive generation. Like the Old Testament writers, Mrs. Laurence feels keenly the influence of her ancestors, Canada's pioneers, who have contributed to her 'collective cultural memory.'

Erich Auerbach uses this concept of time to differentiate Biblical and Homeric style as

the human beings in the Biblical stories have greater depths of time, fate, and consciousness than do the human beings in Homer; although they are nearly always caught up in an event engaging all their faculties, they are not so entirely immersed in its present that they do not remain continually conscious of what has happened to them earlier and elsewhere; their thoughts and feelings have more layers, are more entangled. 9

Auerbach also emphasizes a further distinction when he explains that the religious intent of the Biblical stories "involves an absolute claim to historical truth."¹⁰ This fact may be Mrs. Laurence's primary motive in deciding to infuse the Bible into her work.

There's a great deal, for example in the Bible which really hits me very hard; it seems to express certain symbolic truths about the human dilemma and about mankind. 11

How did Margaret Laurence first become acquainted with the book that would profoundly influence all her writing? The answer is provided by her semi-fictional counterpart, Vanessa MacLeod, in *A Bird in the House*. The exigencies of Canada's depression years forced Vanessa to "read large portions of the Bible by myself, for I was constantly hard-up for reading material."¹² As a fledgling writer she

was much occupied by the themes of love and death, although my experience of both had so far been gained principally from the Bible, which I read in the same way as I read Eaton's Catalogue...because I had to read something, and the family's finances in the thirties did not permit the purchase of enough volumes of *Doctor Doolittle* or the Oz books to keep me going. 13

When asked if she has made use of any books of Biblical introduction or criticism, Mrs. Laurence replied,

I have never taken any theological studies, but I did in fact read large portions of the Bible when I was a child, and then in adulthood re-discovered the majesty, wisdom and mystery of those writings. 14

This reacquaintance with the Bible is described in the opening pages of *The Prophet's Camel Bell*, the documentary of the years she spent in Somaliland from 1950-1952. En route through the Suez Canal she saw the

bleak stretches of the Sinai desert, then, and the distant peak of Mount Sinai where Moses received the stone tablets of the Law. And I recalled what I had chanced to read only a short time before. ...I had gone ill-provided with reading material

and had paced the hotel room until I discovered in a dressing-table drawer the ubiquitous Gideons Bible and read for the first time in my life the five books of Moses. Of all the books which I might have chosen to read just then, few would have been more to the point.... 15

Though many of her analogies are found in the first book of Moses, her fiction also reveals the influence of the New Testament, particularly the writings of St. Paul and St. John the Divine. It is thus no mere coincidence that the titles of her books contain such words as prophet, Jordan, angel, God and diviner. Her primary concerns with freedom and survival are variations on the great Biblical theme of the Israelites' desire for release from bondage in Egypt in order to achieve their dream of life in the Promised Land. Another significant influence of the Bible in Margaret Laurence's work is the concept of grace, which

more than any other idea binds the two Testaments together into a complete whole, for the Bible is the story of the saving work of God, that is, of the grace of God. Without grace, there would never have been any chosen people, any story to tell at all. 16

Clara Thomas, author of several articles and studies about Mrs. Laurence, has observed that there is in all of her writing, "though particularly marked in *The Diviners*, a New Testament sense of the mysterious, but inexhaustible presence of God's grace."¹⁷ This same grace which contributed to Jacob's experience at Peniel and Morag Gunn's in *The Diviners* also affected Delacroix.

The painter had heard in the cathedrals the mighty organs singing out their great cantatas which suggested a Presence and man's search for it. Delacroix too struck out for this inexpressible Being and in doing so found peace of mind. 18

Margaret Laurence, who feels that "For me, writing is one way of praying,"¹⁹ proclaims that conviction in her work with a skilful use of Biblical themes, characters and events to enhance and strengthen those ideas which are uniquely hers.

* * *

In tracing the influence of the Bible in Margaret Laurence's writing, the chapters of this study follow the chronology of her published work with the single exception of *A Bird in the House* which has been placed in the second chapter with *The Tomorrow-Tamer and Other Stories* as both books are collections of short stories. Because the emphasis is primarily on Mrs. Laurence's mature fiction, there are only passing references to her uncollected writings, a children's book titled *Jason's Quest* and *Long Drums and Cannons*, a book of literary criticism. The first chapter covers the beginning of her career with the three books that she wrote in Africa. Chapter Two compares her short stories and the third chapter deals with her three major works known as the 'Manawaka novels.' *The Diviners*, technically also a Manawaka novel, is the cul-

mination of Margaret Laurence's work and the focus of Chapter Four.

As Mrs. Laurence once said, "I'm particularly attached to the King James version of the Bible, because it *is* the poetry of it that really hits me,"²⁰ that edition of scripture has been used as the source of all Biblical quotations. The bibliography, which is also a checklist of the critical material on Margaret Laurence presently available in Victoria libraries, is followed by a brief chronology.

FOOTNOTES

¹Kenneth Clark, *Civilisation* (London: B.B.C., 1969), pp. 314-315.

²See Gen. 32:24-30.

³Adelaide Murgia, *The Life and Times of Delacroix*, trans. Peter Muccini (London: Paul Hamlyn, 1968), p. 74.

⁴"Charlie reminded Morag of various prairie farmers -- he wrestled with the land like Jacob wrestling with the Angel of the Lord, until (if ever) it blessed him." (*The Diviners*, p. 410)

⁵Northrop Frye, *The Bush Garden* (Toronto: Anansi, 1971), p. 227.

⁶Margaret Laurence, quoted by Donnalù Wigmore in "Margaret Laurence: The Woman Behind the Writing," *Chatelaine*, 41 (February 1971), p. 54.

⁷Northrop Frye, *Anatomy of Criticism* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1957), p. 341. Cf. *The Bush Garden*, p. ix.

⁸Margaret Laurence, "Time and the Narrative Voice," *The Narrative Voice*, ed. John Metcalf (Toronto: McGraw-Hill Ryerson, 1972), p. 126.

⁹Erich Auerbach, *Mimesis*, trans. Willard R. Trask (1953; rpt. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1968), p. 12.

¹⁰Auerbach, *Mimesis*, p. 14.

¹¹Margaret Laurence, quoted by Donald Cameron in "Margaret Laurence: The Black Celt Speaks of Freedom," *Conversations with Canadian Novelists* (Toronto: Macmillan, 1973), Part I, p. 112.

¹²Margaret Laurence, *A Bird in the House* (1970; rpt. Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1974), p. 7.

¹³Laurence, *A Bird in the House*, p. 64.

¹⁴Margaret Laurence, Letter to Miriam Lancaster, 11 April 1976.

¹⁵Margaret Laurence, *The Prophet's Camel Bell* (London: Macmillan, 1963), p. 9. The apparent contradiction in the author's reference to reading the Pentateuch "for the first time in my life" may be explained as meaning the first time she read the five books *in toto*.

¹⁶A *Theological Word Book of the Bible*, ed. Alan Richardson (London: S.C.M. Press, 1957), p. 101.

¹⁷Clara Thomas, *The Manawaka World of Margaret Laurence* (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1975), p. 21.

¹⁸Murgia, *The Life and Times of Delacroix*, p. 74.

¹⁹Margaret Laurence, Letter to M. Lancaster, 11 April 1976.

²⁰Margaret Laurence, quoted by Donald Cameron in *Conversations with Canadian Novelists*, p. 112.

Chapter One

THE EARLY WORKS: ALIENATION AND EXILE

Also thou shalt not oppress a stranger:
for ye know the heart of a stranger,
seeing ye were strangers in the land
of Egypt.

Exodus 23:9

In 1947 Margaret Laurence (then Jean Margaret Wemyss) graduated from United College in Winnipeg, where she had studied English literature and had been the assistant editor of *Vox*, the college magazine. Also that year she married Jack Laurence, an engineering student. After a brief career as a journalist, she went overseas with her husband to London and from there in 1950 to the Somaliland Protectorate where Mr. Laurence had been hired as a civil engineer for the British Colonial Service.

As she approached the desert country that was to be her home for the next two years, she saw a landscape already familiar from her recent reading of the Pentateuch.¹ Later, as she assimilated into Somali life, contemporary events would constantly remind her of Biblical precedents. Like the Israelites in Egypt, Mrs. Laurence was an alien and the common bond of exile bridged the time differential of more than 3000 years.

After God had delivered his chosen people from bondage He was quick to remind them to show compassion to foreigners, "for ye know the heart of a stranger, seeing ye were strangers in the land of Egypt."² Like the Israelites, the Somalis had been taught "generosity to strangers and help to the poor -- this is a basic tenet of the Muslim religion."³ The verse from Exodus

remained with me most of all, when at last and for the first time I was myself a stranger in a strange land, and was sometimes given hostile words and was also given, once, food and shelter in a time of actual need, by tribesmen who had little enough for themselves. 4

In Somaliland Mrs. Laurence experienced at first hand the rigours of existence under adverse conditions and recorded her vivid impressions in a journal and in letters to her family in Canada. Constantly amazed at the Somali capacity for endurance, she compared them to Job, the Biblical archetype of undeserved suffering.

Like Job, they could find it within themselves to say -- *Though He slay me, yet will I trust in Him.* We had to accept faith's intense reality for them. They lived in the palm of God's hand. If His hand crushed them, so be it. 5

(PCB, p. 53)

While her husband supervised the building of approximately thirty earth dams, or *ballehs*, Margaret Laurence discovered the oral literature of the native people. To her amazement, the Somalis were "a nation of poets." (TFP, p. 1) Sustained not only by their faith, they -- in common with the people of

ancient Israel -- found strength in their literature. Deprived of nearly all the materials needed for the traditional arts of weaving, painting and sculpture, they had developed songs, poems and stories as their predominant cultural media. With the help of one of the *balleh* workers, Mrs. Laurence produced the first collection of Somali poems and folk-tales to appear in English: *A Tree for Poverty* (1954). As one reviewer has appropriately described her work, "Like her husband's reservoirs, which gather the desert rain, she gathers the desert poems and folk tales, for the use of others."⁶

As she worked on these translations she uncovered further affinities between the Israelites and the Somalis. Both cultures forbade the making of graven images; "their intense minds could, nevertheless, conceive vivid mental images which would find expression in metaphor and parable."⁷ Both literatures are characterized by contrasts. In her notes on the Somali story, "Wiil Waal and the Silver Ring," Mrs. Laurence comments

In the Bible, too, and particularly in the Old Testament, exactly the same contrasts are found. Cruelty and compassion, guile and piety, the virtues of poverty and the splendours of wealth -- there is a place for all. Jacob, beloved of God, who was to wrestle with the angel of the Lord, this same Jacob increased his flocks and herds from among the stock of Laban by means of magic and a ruse, so that "the feebler were Laban's, and the stronger Jacob's." 8

(TFP, p. 27)

The story of Jacob and the Angel reappears in connection with the mythical hero of several Arabic and Somali tales, Nebii Hhudur. Hhudur is a prophet reminiscent of the wandering Jew. Gifted with eternal life, he travels over the earth often disguised as a beggar.

There is only one way of recognizing Hhudur. In his right thumb there is no bone, only flesh, so that if one shakes hands with him the thumb will bend backwards. There is a belief here that this is the reason why a Muslim will always shake hands by pressing against the thumb of the other person. If anyone finds Hhudur in this way, he is supposed to grasp his hand until his blessing is given, in somewhat the same way as Jacob (Genesis 32:26) forced a blessing from the Angel -- "I will not let thee go, except thou bless me."

(TFP, pp. 71-72)

It was not until 1963 that Margaret Laurence published her Somali journal under the title of *The Prophet's Camel Bell*. Described by George Woodcock as "a combination of autobiography and travel writing of a quality neither genre often attains in Canada,"⁹ this book is the seed-bed of the author's concerns for freedom, communication and survival which come to fruition as the dominant themes of her later fiction.

Her awareness of detail in evoking landscape and character was honed by life in Somaliland's alternating climate of drought and flood. In the dry seasons she was reminded of the Israelites' wanderings in the desert.

And there was no water for the people to drink -- and the people thirsted. Or,

when we were to wonder how the tribes-
men could possibly live and maintain
hope through the season of drought --
*In the wilderness, where thou hast seen
how that the Lord thy God bare thee, as
a man doth bear his son, in all the way
that ye went.* 10

(PCB, p. 9)

Similarly the coming of the spring floods brought to mind a
Biblical precedent, this time from the Song of Songs.

*The time of the singing of birds is come,
And the voice of the turtle is heard in
our land.*

If the rains ever came, perhaps even the
Haud would be like Solomon's kingdom after
the dry winter, when the flowers appeared
on the earth and the vines were in blossom. 11

(PCB, p. 67)

When calamities occurred Mrs. Laurence also found Biblical
analogies. While waiting for some heavy equipment to arrive,
the Laurences were obliged to stay in Zeilah, a town whose
name in original Arabic means 'a place of exile.' There they
were beset by the same inconvenience which God sent to punish
Egypt -- a plague of locusts, which "seemed like the giant
locusts of the Apocalypse -- *the sound of their wings was as
the sound of chariots of many horses running to battle.*"¹²
(PCB, p. 105) A native's description of capturing the thieves
who had looted their truck-home reminded Mrs. Laurence of the
destruction of Sennacherib, the Assyrian king whose army was
demolished in one night when he invaded the kingdom of Judah.¹³

In her work of translation and in her journal, Mrs. Laur-
ence uses the Bible primarily as a basis of comparison. Al-

though there are scattered mentions of several Old Testament events, her frame of reference at this point is primarily the Israelites at the time of the Exodus.

Following the completion of his work for the British government in Somaliland, Jack Laurence was appointed engineer in charge of building the port harbour of Tema near the capital city of Accra. When the Laurences moved to the Gold Coast in 1952, they found themselves in an Africa totally unlike their first experience. Whereas the Somalis maintained a style of life that had altered little since Biblical times, the people of the Gold Coast were in the midst of many changes emanating from their break with the historical past to become Britain's first African colony to gain independence.

The terrain and the people themselves provided a further study in contrasts. The setting was no longer desert, but forest and grassland. In religious affiliation the Somalis with their Arabic origins were Moslems; the majority of Ghanaians, a Negro people, were Christians. While Somaliland was relatively poor in resources, the Gold Coast enjoyed a prosperous economy based on the commodity of alluvial gold. The five years that the Laurences spent in Accra were crucial ones in the country's political development, coinciding with the ascendancy of Kwame Nkrumah, leader of the Convention People's Party (CPP). From 1952-1957

the Gold Coast passed rapidly through a period of transition in which government was transferred by stages to an all-African cabinet responsible to a national assembly elected by adult suffrage. 14

On March 6, 1957, Ghana became a self-governing dominion with Nkrumah as the Prime Minister.

Continuing her pattern of juxtaposing contemporary African life and comparable events in the Bible, Margaret Laurence now saw the Ghanaians at the same point in their nation's history as the Israelites were when they stood on the banks of the Jordan in preparation to cross the last barrier separating them from freedom in the Promised Land.

During the years of oppression in Egypt, the deliverance through the Red Sea and the years of wandering in the Sinai Desert, Moses had been the great leader of the Hebrew people. Having founded both the religion and nation of Israel and bringing his followers within sight of the land of Canaan, his purpose was fulfilled. One of his final acts was to appoint Joshua, his most trusted helper, as his successor and the man who would lead the Israelites ultimately to freedom.¹⁵

Using this dramatic moment from the Old Testament as her organizing metaphor, Mrs. Laurence builds the framework for her first published work of fiction, *This Side Jordan* (1960). The novel's title refers to the land on the east side of the river which had already been claimed by the Israelites and its epigraph contains Joshua's command to his officers.¹⁶

Set in Accra just before Independence Day this novel is the story of a twentieth-century quest for freedom from the bondage of the past, represented on the national level as political freedom for the new country and on the human level as individual freedom for the two main characters. The narrative has a symmetry that often seems contrived as Mrs. Laurence attempts to depict the rival cultures but the novel is justified by her portrayal of Nathaniel Amegbe. Like the protagonists of Chinua Achebe, a writer greatly admired by Mrs. Laurence,¹⁷ Nathaniel must contend with the outer forces of political change as well as the inner tensions of his own insecurity.

The escape of Johnnie Kestoe, the British accountant, from the bondage of his past -- represented by a ruthless climb to the top to obliterate the nightmare of his mother's death in poverty -- is a purely personal one. Nathaniel Amegbe, on the other hand, reflects the dilemma of contemporary Africa. Like many of his countrymen he took the first step in liberating himself from the influence of his ancestors¹⁸ by converting to Christianity.

Before he went to the mission school, he had had an African name. He never thought of it now, even to himself. His name was Nathaniel. They had given him that name at the mission school. 19

The name Nathaniel means 'gift of God.' In the New Testament Nathaniel is a native of Cana in Galilee and is generally ac-

cepted to be Bartholomew, one of the twelve apostles. In the Bible changes of name are ascribed to divine intervention.

Jacob's name was changed to Israel for wrestling with God (Gn 32:29; cf. 35:10). The names of Abram and Sarai were changed into Abraham and Sarah (Gn 17:5, 15); these are only dialect forms of the same names, but if one recalls the significance of names discussed above, a change of name would mark a change in the person's destiny (cf. Gn 17:6, 16). 20

Though Nathaniel would like to control his destiny, he -- like his country -- is caught in limbo between the past and the future. Though he rejects the invitation of his Uncle Adjei to leave the city and return to his village as clerk to the chief, his favorite course at the ironically named Futura Academy is African Civilizations of the Past. The schizophrenic tension of the day resurfaces in his dreams at night. When he dreams of King Jesus the Redeemer, he sees a rider "on a milk-white horse. And He crossed the river of Jordan" (*TSJ*, p. 76) but awakes

cold with sweat. He tried to remember. But it was gone. Then he remembered one thing. Jesus, fantastically, had been arrayed like a King of Ashanti.

(*TSJ*, p. 77)

A conversation between Nathaniel and his uncle reveals his precarious position.

'You are young,' his uncle said.
'Some day you will know where you belong.'
Nathaniel grinned, and bitterness welled up in him.
'I belong between yesterday and today.'

Adjei Boateng smiled also.
 'But that is nowhere.'
 'I know,' Nathaniel replied. 'Yes,
 I know.'

(*TSJ*, pp. 106-107)

The white community in Accra is similarly stranded as the impending independence of Ghana represents a threat to its security. Ironically most of its members had achieved a level of success in Africa that they would never have reached in England. Mrs. Laurence pictures them as exiles in their retreat to the last sanctuary, the Club.

The exiles of three generations had met here to drink and to mourn the lost island home for which they longed but to which they did not want to return until they were old.

(*TSJ*, p. 140)

The exiles of the Old Testament experienced disillusion and despair during their wanderings in the desert. Often frustrated by their displacement they were tempted to revert to heathen ways. While Moses received God's commandments on Mount Sinai, the Israelites constructed a golden calf which they worshipped with great revelry. Both Johnnie and Nathaniel are similarly tempted to wrongdoing. Nathaniel accepts bribes from two of his students and Johnnie betrays both his colleagues and his wife.

In jeopardizing his chance to be part of his country's future, Nathaniel is identified with Isaac's older son who lost his place in history by foolishly selling the privileges

of the firstborn male.

He was Esau. He had sold his birth-right and now could not take up his inheritance. Independence was not for him. Free-Dom was not for him. He would not go to prison. But what could gain him his release from the prison of himself?

(*TSJ*, p. 227)

In the room where he rapes the young African, Johnnie's attention is attracted by two objects -- a "stout black Gideon Bible," (*TSJ*, p. 228) symbol of repentance, and a colour portrait of Nkrumah, symbolized by its caption, 'Freedom.'

Before the Israelites could continue on their journey to freedom, their folly had to be pardoned by God.

And it came to pass on the morrow, that
Moses said unto the people, Ye have sinned
a great sin; and now I will go up unto the
Lord; peradventure I shall make an atone-
ment for your sin. 21

Though Ghana's political freedom seems assured, Nathaniel's personal freedom is in doubt until he attends a revival meeting, albeit reluctantly. To illustrate the theme of salvation the preacher chooses the story of God's message to Joshua.

Now after the death of Moses the servant
of the Lord it came to pass, that the
Lord spake unto Joshua the son of Nun,
Moses' minister saying, Moses my servant
is dead; now therefore arise, go over
this Jordan, thou and all this people,
unto the land which I do give to them,
even to the children of Israel. 22

A kind of salvation for both Johnnie and Nathaniel is represented by the birth of their children even though this

coincidence does give the novel a somewhat artificial conclusion. Nathaniel's decision to name his son Joshua (after the Old Testament parallel to Jesus; both names mean 'God saves') means that, in Margaret Laurence's words,

victory for the side of the angels is all but assured. Nathaniel holds up his newborn son, at the end, and says "Cross Jordan, Joshua." Jordan the mythical *could* be crossed; the dream-goal of the promised land *could* be achieved, if not in Nathaniel's lifetime, then his son's. 23

FOOTNOTES

¹See *Introduction*, pp. 5-6, footnote 15.

²Exod. 23:9.

³Margaret Laurence, *A Tree for Poverty* (1954; rpt. Hamilton: McMaster University, 1970), p. 28. Hereafter abbreviated as *TFP*.

⁴Margaret Laurence, *The Prophet's Camel Bell* (London: Macmillan, 1963), p. 9. Hereafter abbreviated as *PCB*.

⁵Cf. Job 13:15.

⁶John M. Robson, untitled review, *University of Toronto Quarterly*, 33 (July 1964), p. 432.

⁷Charles Allen Dinsmore, *The English Bible as Literature* (New York: Houghton Mifflin Co., 1931), p. 27.

⁸Cf. Gen. 30:42.

⁹George Woodcock, "Jungle and Prairie," *Canadian Literature*, 45 (Summer 1970), p. 83.

¹⁰Cf. Exod. 17:1,3 and Deut. 1:31.

¹¹Cf. Song 2:12.

¹²Cf. Rev. 9:9.

¹³See II Ki. 18, 19 and II Chron. 32 and Isa. 36, 37.

¹⁴*Encyclopaedia Britannica*, vol. 10 (1970 ed.), p. 383.

¹⁵Sinclair Ross, a writer who had an early influence on Margaret Laurence, was also inspired by the book of Joshua when he wrote *As For Me and My House*. See the article by Sandra Djwa, "False Gods and the True Covenant: Thematic Continuity between Margaret Laurence and Sinclair Ross," *Journal of Canadian Fiction*, 1:4 (Fall 1972): 43-50.

¹⁶Josh. 1:15.

¹⁷See Margaret Laurence, *Long Drums and Cannons* (London: Macmillan, 1968), pp. 97-125.

¹⁸The problem of the paralyzing influence of one's ancestors is one that recurs in Mrs. Laurence's fiction -- even in her book for children, *Jason's Quest*.

¹⁹Margaret Laurence, *This Side Jordan* (London: Macmillan, 1960), p. 242. Hereafter abbreviated as *TSJ*.

²⁰Roland de Vaux, *Ancient Israel: Its Life and Institutions*, trans. John McHugh (1961; rpt. London: Darton, Longman and Todd, 1973), pp. 45-46.

²¹Exod. 32:30.

²²Josh. 1:2,3.

²³Margaret Laurence, "Ten Years' Sentences," *Canadian Literature*, 41 (Summer 1969), p. 12.

Chapter Two

THE SHORT STORIES: FREEDOM ACHIEVED

And ye shall know the truth,
and the truth shall make you free.

John 8:32

The overtones of Christian salvation which Margaret Laurence introduced towards the end of *This Side Jordan* continue to accompany the journey from exile in the short stories. Since her first collection, *The Tomorrow-Tamer and Other Stories* (1963), retains the African setting, the goal of freedom can be political as well as personal. Though each story is a separate unit, the collection has an overall thematic cohesion provided by the effects of change on Ghana's citizens. When Mrs. Laurence presents this metamorphosis as a form of salvation, her tales become parables. "There is a sense in which all of these tales are parables of salvation or the failure to attain it, a failure which is always linked to personal bondage."¹

Salvation is a mystery to Matthew, the narrator of the opening story, because he remains an exile wherever he lives. Returning to Ghana after ten years in England he "felt suddenly rootless, a stranger in the only land I could call home."² His memories of Africa were the romantic recollections of a child

who received more love from the family of Yaa, his wet nurse, than from his missionary parents.

Shocked and disillusioned to see the changes that emerging nationhood has brought to this part of Africa, Matthew is an alien in a strange country. His nostalgic vision of the Promised Land is obscured by the sight of an old chieftain without a retinue, mammy-lorries painted with trade union slogans, and Yaa's children who greet him with the scorn he once reserved for his father.

It is then that Matthew realizes that he is unable to 'cross the Jordan' with Africa on its way to Independence, but will remain instead a sojourner, "the tourist who wanted antique quaintness to remain unchanged." (*TT*, p. 18) The bond of exile unites him with the psalmist who wrote:

Hear my prayer, O Lord, and give ear
unto my cry; hold not thy peace at my
tears: for I am a stranger with thee,
and a sojourner, as all my fathers were. 3

Salvation in the Old Testament is centered on God's acts of deliverance. Since Matthew cannot be part of this exodus, the story comes full circle with his cry that salvation remains a mystery.

My father thought he was bringing Salvation to Africa. I do not any longer know what salvation is. I only know that one man cannot find it for another man, and one land cannot bring it to another.

(*TT*, p. 18)

To portray a second stranger in Africa Mrs. Laurence uses

Biblical analogies with a touch of irony and humour. The arrival of Amory Lemon, "The Merchant of Heaven," initiates a mock-epic of the travels of St. Paul.

The apostle landing at Cyprus or Thes-salonica, the light of future battles already kindling in his eyes, and re-plete with faith as a fresh-gorged mosquito is with blood.

(*TT*, p. 51)

Through the narrator, a white architect, Mrs. Laurence leavens with gentle malice her descriptions of the evangelist's futile attempts to adjust to African ways.

Jacob-like, he came to wrestle for the Angel's blessing, and instead was bent double with cramps in his bowels from eating unwashed salad greens.

(*TT*, p. 57)

The tone of the story becomes more serious as Mrs. Laur-ence adds a second dimension to the characterization of Brother Lemon. While Will Kettridge, the narrator, believes the mis-sionary to be well-intentioned, the native artist, Danso, is convinced that Lemon's influence is dangerous. These opposing views are presented in the context of Paul and Elymas, the true and false prophets.

On his first missionary journey St. Paul was accompanied by Barnabas, one of the twelve apostles. Brother Lemon also

had expected to find an African Barnabas, but he was disappointed. His cook was a decent enough chap, but he helped himself to tea and sugar.

(*TT*, p. 58)

On Cyprus Paul and Barnabas were confronted by a false prophet named Elymas.

But Elymas the sorcerer (for so is his name by interpretation) withstood them, seeking to turn away the deputy from the faith. Then Saul, (who is also called Paul,) filled with the Holy Ghost, set his eyes on him, and said, O full of all subtilty and all mischief, thou child of the devil, thou enemy of all righteousness, wilt thou not cease to pervert the right ways of the Lord? 4

Will becomes increasingly aware of the missionary's ability to distort Christianity.

When I first met Brother Lemon, I had seen him as he must have seen himself, an apostle. Now I could almost see him with Danso's bitter eyes -- as sorcerer.

(*TT*, p. 55)

Mrs. Laurence is obviously disturbed at the missionaries' lack of reverence for native religious objects and beliefs. In "The Drummer of All the World" Matthew is ashamed at his father's destruction of fetish huts which is justified by the story of Moses and the Golden Calf.⁵ In Matthew's interpretation of this Biblical scene, "Moses broke the idols of his own people." (*TT*, p. 5) A New Testament parallel to this event takes place in the theatre at Ephesus where a hostile crowd riots when Paul preaches against the worship of the goddess Diana.⁶ Will confronts Lemon in the same spirit of anger.

'What do you expect?' I burst out.
'Even Paul nearly got torn to pieces
by the Ephesians defending their god-

dess. And who knows -- maybe Diana was better for them than Jehovah. She was theirs, anyway.'

(*TT*, p. 69)

His attempts at bringing salvation to Africa having failed, Brother Lemon, who began so "confidently stepping onto the alien soil of his chosen Thessalonica, to take up his ordained role" (*TT*, p. 75), is forced to resign, a St. Paul *manqué*. Though Danso will always remember him as "the magician, the pedlar who bought souls cheap, and sold dear his cabbalistic word" (*TT*, p. 77), Will's judgment blurs in the distance of time and he "can no longer think of Brother Lemon as either Paul or Elymas, apostle or sorcerer." (*TT*, p. 77) By ending her story with Will's appraisal, Mrs. Laurence avoids the possibility for satire.

From her days in Somaliland the plight of the alien has always attracted Margaret Laurence's sympathy. Her third variation on the theme of exile is provided by Ruth Quansah, "The Rain Child," whose predicament counterpoints Matthew's in "The Drummer of All the World." Though her parents were African, Ruth was born in England and lived there until her father returned to Africa and enrolled her at the Eburaso Girls' School. There she finds herself unable to adapt to the ironically foreign customs of food and dress. Reduced to tears, she calls to mind the description of her Old Testament namesake, the archetypal exile, in Keats' "Ode to a

Nightingale."

Perhaps the self-same song that found a path
Through the sad heart of Ruth, when sick for home,
She stood in tears amid the alien corn

The book of Ruth, one of the Bible's most idyllic passages, is the story of a woman who voluntarily chooses exile in order to be with Naomi, her mother-in-law. When both women lose their husbands in Ruth's homeland of Moab, Ruth accompanies Naomi in her return home to Bethlehem. God rewards her constancy with a happy second marriage and a place in the line of David.

In the Quansah family, however, exile has produced more sorrow than joy for both mother and daughter, an ironic reversal of the Biblical archetype.

Ruth -- you know, when she was born, my wife called her by an African name which means "child of the rain." My wife missed the sun so very much. The rain, too, may have stood for her own tears. She had not wanted to bear her child so far from home.'

(TT, p. 121)

*Hagan
like
Ruth?*

In the Bible "Ruth's outstanding quality was a beauty of heart, a generosity of soul, a firm sense of duty, and a meekness which often goes hand in hand with the gift of decision."⁷ The character who embodies these virtues in "The Rain Child" is not Ruth Quansah but Violet Nedden, the elderly schoolmistress and narrator of the story. She too is an exile though, unlike Matthew, Brother Lemon or Ruth Quansah, she has been successfully transplanted from her native home to Africa. Resisting the temptation

to surround herself with reminders of England (such as the headmistress' 'exiled rosebush'⁸), she has flourished like the flowers in her garden which "burns magnificently with jungle lily and poinsettia, which Yindo gently uproots from the forest and puts in here." (*TT*, p. 112) Miss Nedden's compassion for her students is demonstrated by her special affection for Ayesha, the young child-prostitute, and Ruth, whose situation reminds her of the verse from Exodus that Margaret Laurence found so appropriate in *The Prophet's Camel Bell*: "Thou shalt not oppress a stranger, for ye know the heart of a stranger, seeing ye were strangers in the land of Egypt."⁹ To avoid total identification with the Biblical Ruth, Mrs. Laurence replaces meekness with Violet's proclivity to pride, and in so doing also anticipates a future heroine inspired by scripture -- Hagar Shipley. For Violet confesses that

Pride has so often been my demon,
the tempting conviction that one is
able to see the straight path and to
point it out to others.

(*TT*, p. 125)

The story ends with a recapitulation of the exile theme as Miss Nedden contemplates her final earthly journey.

I think of that island of grey rain
where I must go as a stranger, when
the time comes, while others must
remain as strangers here.

(*TT*, p. 133)

Unlike those who have been totally frustrated as exiles, Violet Nedden accepts the challenge with a philosophy reflecting the Biblical teaching that we are all strangers and sojourners in this life, awaiting God's call to perfect freedom.

A cogent example of the Bible's influence in shaping the thoughts of Margaret Laurence is the title story of the African collection. Though "The Tomorrow-Tamer" contains no specific scriptural references, its ethos is Biblical as the author reveals in her commentary in *Sixteen by Twelve*, the John Metcalf anthology. The story has its origin in an actual casualty on a bridge across Ghana's Volta River. Some years later Mrs. Laurence recalled that incident when writing a story about the inevitable clash when two widely varying cultures meet.

The construction of a bridge brings Kofi, a young villager, in contact with a new society, an experience that will prove to be costly. His first opportunity to see past the confines of his native village to the world beyond is followed immediately by his fall from the bridge tower. While his fellow bridge workers attribute his accident to carelessness, the natives see his death as a sacrifice made by the bridge to the river.

Many religions have emphasized the importance of sacrifice to a deity. The Israelites set aside one day each year, the Day of Atonement, to make reparation for transgressing the Law. As part of the ritual a goat was loaded with the weight of the

community's sins and led into the wilderness. Margaret Laurence uses this analogy to describe Kofi as

both scapegoat, unintentionally, and messiah, also unintentionally. He himself is the bridge, not between better and worse cultures, but simply between different cultures, between people who do not understand one another, and who, at some point, must try. 10

Kofi's example thus becomes a secular imitation of Christ, who by his unique nature bridges humanity and divinity and who was sent from God to be both the Messiah to lead his people and the scapegoat to expiate their sins.

Mrs. Laurence has also stated that freedom is the "continuing theme in everything I have written"¹¹ and has described her interpretation of this theme in the story titled "Godman's Master" where

freedom is not presented in political terms, but in terms of the individual coming to terms with his own past and with himself, accepting his limitations and going on from there, however terrified he may be. When Moses, the young man, says to the dwarf, "There's more to freedom than not living in a box," Godman says, "You would not think so if you had ever lived in a box." 12

Just as Moses led the Israelites out of bondage so Moses Adu releases Godman Pira from his box-prison. Deliverance is not, however, an automatic guarantee of freedom. Moses is horrified to learn that the dwarf is still dependent on a master. "Had Godman only moved from the simple bondage of the amber-eyed

Faru to another bondage?" (*TT*, p. 155) Though Godman may feel liberated, real freedom to Moses means that one must be allowed to exist independently. Though the dwarf finds survival difficult on his own, he is sustained by the legacy of his ancestors, the *pirrafo* who were court jesters to the kings of Ashanti. Godman's definition of freedom is the absence of bondage but Moses would prefer a more positive interpretation. When he meets his former servant in the travelling sideshow (an African 'World of Wonder') where he is an oracle -- 'half god' and 'half man' as his name very obviously suggests -- Moses looks for external evidences of change.

'You are the same,' Moses said,
bewildered. 'And yet -- you are
not quite the same.'

(*TT*, p. 159)

Margaret Laurence realizes that freedom is more likely to produce internal rather than external changes as she explores the metamorphosis again in "A Gourdful of Glory." After Independence Day Mammii Ama, the vivacious market woman,

was herself again, known and familiar.
And yet -- there was something more,
something that had not been before.
She tried to think what it was, but
it eluded her. She could feel it,
though.

(*TT*, pp. 243-244)

What she feels is the incorporation of both species of freedom as her personal confidence and dignity reflects the new status of her country. Concomitant with freedom, however, is responsi-

bility.

For so is the will of God, that
with well doing ye may put to
silence the ignorance of foolish
men: as free, and not using your
liberty for a cloke of malicious-
ness, but as the servants of God. 13

In her dealings with the white woman shopper Mammii Ama demonstrates her acceptance of this responsibility. By silencing the woman's ignorance she assures the other market traders that they no longer need suffer sarcasm or shame. With this revelation "there was a truth in her words, more true than reality." (*TT*, p. 242) Having followed the progress of the Exodus, the collection of African stories concludes with this symbol of hope for the future as Mammii Ama stands like a royal palm, "rooted in magnificence, spreading her arms like fronds, to shelter the generations." (*TT*, p. 244)

* * *

The experience of living and writing in Africa provided Margaret Laurence with a structure and perspective from which she could now explore her Canadian heritage. Had she not been separated from her prairie home by time and distance, she might have been tempted to write an autobiographical first novel.

I don't say there is anything wrong in autobiographical novels, but it would not have been the right thing for me -- my view of the prairie town from which I had come was still too prejudiced and distorted by closeness. I had to get

farther away from it before I could
begin to see it. 14

The Laurences moved to Vancouver, B.C. in 1957 and Mrs. Laurence commenced work on her first novel set in Canada, *The Stone Angel*. Following its publication in 1963 she wrote several Canadian short stories which were collected in 1970 as *A Bird in the House*. By this time she was ready to introduce the theme of freedom in 'fictionalized autobiography' and also exorcise the spirit of her grandfather, a "very strong, authoritarian old man... [who] ... seemed to be as old as God."¹⁵ With its unity of place and characters this collection of stories has a novel-like quality, much like the work of another Manitoba writer -- Gabrielle Roy's *Rue Deschambault*.

Inspired to "come to terms with our ancestral past, to deal with these themes of survival, of freedom and growth, and to record our mythology,"¹⁶ Mrs. Laurence charged herself with a mission akin to that of the Old Testament writers. Though the influence of the Bible may seem less obvious in this collection, it actually provides the unifying structure through the metaphor of Jericho.

Once Joshua had successfully led the Israelites across the Jordan River, there remained a final obstacle to overcome before freedom could finally be secured. To claim the land of Canaan the Israelites had to capture the walled city of Jericho.

See
cassette

Assured of God's providence, Joshua instructed his followers to compass the walls for six days. On the seventh day

the people shouted when the priests blew with the trumpets: and it came to pass, when the people heard the sound of the trumpet, and the people shouted with a great shout, that the wall fell down flat, so that the people went up into the city, every man straight before him, and they took the city. 17

With her predilection for the Bible young Vanessa MacLeod casts her grandfather in the Jericho mold as he represents an impediment to her freedom. Her bondage has been cumulative, imposed by both her family and the town. Margaret Laurence recalls her own family as representing

on the one hand a repressed community, on the other hand a community in which the values of the individual were extraordinarily strongly recognized, if only sometimes by implication. 18

Neepawa, Manitoba -- the inspiration for the fictional town of Manawaka -- reinforced the aspect of repression.

The town of my childhood could be called bizarre, agonizingly repressive or cruel at times, and the land in which it grew could be called harsh in the violence of its seasonal changes. 19

During the thirties the town was indeed repressed as it suffered from both drought and economic depression.

Confinement for Vanessa is vividly effected by the Brick House, described at the beginning of the book as being

sparsely windowed as some crusader's embattled fortress in a heathen wil-

derness, its rooms in a perpetual gloom
except in the brief height of summer. 20

As "part dwelling place and part massive monument" (*BH*, p. 3)
it becomes a persistent metaphor for its owner, Grandfather
Timothy Connor. Even he feels imprisoned there at times,
especially on the sabbath when

he would stalk around the Brick House
as though it were a cage, on Sundays,
impatient for the new week's beginning
that would release him into the only
freedom he knew, the acts of work.

(*BH*, p. 61)

The abiding presence of death, suggested by the book's
title (from the saying 'a bird in the house means a death in
the house') and verified by several deaths in the family, tends
to transform the house from a prison to a tomb. In a Bibli-
cal context the tomb, or sepulcher, symbolizes the place of
transition between the bondage of earthly life and the free-
dom of paradise.²¹

As Vanessa anxiously awaits her release from the Brick
House, she looks for signs of weakness in her grandfather's
defences. The first such indication occurs in "The Sound of
the Singing" when he yields to his wife's request for a recon-
ciliation with Uncle Dan. At the time Vanessa is reminded of
the verse, "How are the mighty fallen in the midst of the bat-
tle,"²² an anticipation of the Jericho metaphor.

The next inkling of potential infirmity is Grandfather's
reaction to his wife's death in "The Mask of the Bear." Mrs.

Laurence's description of his collapse is obviously based on the recollection of her own grandfather, John Simpson.

This was like having a mountain crumble. I was absolutely appalled: I wasn't even compassionate toward him; I was simply horrified at the granite figure suddenly dissolving. This was the only time he ever did. 23

When Vanessa openly confronts her grandfather in the last story of the collection, "Jericho's Brick Battlements," she does so in the context of the controlling metaphor.

I jumped to my feet and faced him.
Our anger met and clashed silently.
Then I shouted at him, as though if I
sounded all my trumpets loudly enough,
his walls would quake and crumble.

(BH, p. 199)

Grandfather does not fall in the midst of this battle, however. Though Vanessa is soon thereafter delivered from the Brick House's bondage, she is still not really free.

And yet in some way which I could not
define or understand, I did not feel
nearly as free as I had expected to
feel.

(BH, p. 203)

In his introduction to the New Canadian Library edition of *A Bird in the House*, Robert Gibbs stresses the Biblical influence in the book's structure.

The Biblical title of the final story points back to the text of the first -- *How are the mighty fallen in the midst of the battle*. The link emphasizes the structural principle whereby the shape of the whole re-

capitulates that of the parts. The brick battlements have been falling all along. The force of the title is ironic and affirmative. Grandfather Connor's death releases more than one bird, but the real freeing has been continuous and is still in process where the book leaves off. 24

Vanessa's liberation appears possible by the end of the book when she begins to see Grandfather's true function. In the words of critic Naïm Kattan,

Ce n'est pas un patriarche qui appuie son autorité sur une sagesse et sur une expérience, mais un ancêtre qui survit à son époque et qui affirme un droit de préséance. 25

An important factor in Vanessa's evolution from childhood to maturity, a parallel to Ghana's transition from colony to nation, is the recognition of the contribution made by one's ancestors. At Grandfather's funeral Vanessa inaugurates her liberation by recalling his majesty rather than severity "in the ancient days when he seemed as large and admirable as God." (BH, p. 206)

A Bird in the House was also the author's vehicle to freedom as she came to terms with her ancestral past. Margaret Laurence relates that

it was through writing these stories that I finally came to see my grandfather not only as the repressive authoritarian figure from my childhood, but also as a boy who had had to leave school in Ontario when he was about twelve, after his father's

death, and who, as a young man, went to Manitoba by sternwheeler and walked the fifty miles from Winnipeg to Portage la Prairie, where he settled for some years before moving to Neepawa. He was a very hard man in many ways, but he had had a very hard life in many ways, too. I don't think I knew any of this, really knew it, until I had finished these stories. I don't think I ever knew, either, until that moment how much I owed to him. One sentence near the end of the final story may show what I mean. "I had feared and fought the old man, yet he proclaimed himself in my veins." 26

Like the people of Israel both she and Vanessa have found value in the past as a source of inspiration and strength.

FOOTNOTES

¹Sandra Djwa, "Biblical Archetype in Western Canadian Fiction," *Western Canada Past and Present*, ed. A.W. Rasporich (Calgary: McClelland and Stewart West, 1975), p. 199.

²Margaret Laurence, *The Tomorrow-Tamer and Other Stories* (1963; rpt. Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1970), p. 13. Hereafter abbreviated as *TT*.

³Psalm 39:12.

⁴Acts 13:8-10.

⁵See Exod. 32.

⁶See Acts 19:21-41.

⁷H.V. Morton, *Women of the Bible* (London: Methuen and Co., 1940), p. 68.

⁸Cf. *PCB*, pp. 22-23 and *TSJ*, p. 126.

⁹Exod. 23:9.

¹⁰Margaret Laurence, quoted in *Sixteen by Twelve*, ed. John Metcalf (Toronto: Ryerson Press, 1970), p. 73.

¹¹Margaret Laurence, quoted by Donald Cameron in "Margaret Laurence: The Black Celt Speaks of Freedom," *Conversations with Canadian Novelists* (Toronto: Macmillan, 1973), Part I, p. 98.

¹²Margaret Laurence, quoted by Donald Cameron in *Conversations with Canadian Novelists*, p. 98.

¹³I Peter 2:15-16.

¹⁴Margaret Laurence, "Sources," *Mosaic*, 3:3 (Spring 1970), p. 81.

¹⁵Margaret Laurence, quoted by Clara Thomas in "A Conversation about Literature: An Interview with Margaret Laurence and Irving Layton," *Journal of Canadian Fiction*, 1 (Winter 1972), p. 67.

¹⁶Margaret Laurence, quoted by Clara Thomas in *Journal of Canadian Fiction*, 1 (Winter 1972), p. 67.

¹⁷Josh. 6:20.

¹⁸Margaret Laurence, quoted by Donald Cameron in *Conversations with Canadian Novelists*, p. 99.

¹⁹Margaret Laurence, "Where the World Began," *Maclean's*, 85 (December 1972), p. 23.

²⁰Margaret Laurence, *A Bird in the House* (1970; rpt. Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1974), p. 3. Hereafter abbreviated as *BH*.

²¹See Thierry Maertens, *Bible Themes: A Source Book* (Notre Dame: Fides Publishers, 1964), vol. II, p. 95.

²²II Sam. 1:25.

²³Margaret Laurence, quoted by Clara Thomas in *Journal of Canadian Fiction*, 1 (Winter 1972), p. 67.

²⁴Robert Gibbs, "Introduction" to *A Bird in the House* (1970; rpt. Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1974), p. xiii.

²⁵Naïm Kattan, "L'enfance et l'adolescence manito-baines de Margaret Laurence," *Liberté*, 12:4 (juillet-août 1970), p. 85.

²⁶Margaret Laurence, "Sources," *Mosaic*, 3:3 (Spring 1970), pp. 82-83.

Chapter Three

SURVIVAL IN THE MANAWAKA NOVELS

I. THE STONE ANGEL

Only by pride cometh contention:
but with the well advised is wisdom.

Proverbs 13:10

The first book that she wrote following her return to Canada in 1957 is the finest example of how thoroughly the Bible has influenced the work of Margaret Laurence. *The Stone Angel* (1964) is the novel which established her reputation and demonstrated convincingly her ability to construct a narrative on a complex framework of Biblical metaphors. Through the archetype of the bondswoman Hagar Mrs. Laurence recreates the Bible's two major symphonic movements of Old Testament promise and New Testament fulfillment.

The inspiration for this novel, the story of Hagar Shipley's quest for self-justification, originated in the same manner as "The Tomorrow-Tamer," that is from the author's own experience.

When I started writing *The Stone Angel*, that's when it hit me like the spirit of God between the eyes. I didn't really intend to start writing a novel set in that generation, but I suddenly realized that this was the place where I had to start, in a sense, with my grandparents' generation. 1

A historical flow corresponding to the four generations that the author has known in her family connects the group of Manawaka novels. Mrs. Laurence's focus on genealogy captures the essence of Biblical chronology which features frequent ancestral catalogues as evidence of the identity and unity of the Hebrew nation. Having researched her own origins as far back as her memory would allow, Mrs. Laurence then discovered parallels in the early days of Old Testament history, beginning with the story of Abraham, founding father of the Hebrew nation.

The first man to respond to the divine call, Abraham was promised a son and innumerable posterity as guaranteed by God's Covenant.

Now the Lord had said unto Abram,
Get thee out of thy country, and
from thy kindred, and from thy
father's house, unto a land that
I will show thee: and I will make
of thee a great nation, and I will
bless thee, and make thy name great;
and thou shalt be a blessing: 2

However, the barrenness of Abraham's wife, Sarah, presented an impediment to the fulfillment of God's reward. Unable to see herself as the mother of many children, Sarah pressed on her husband a young Egyptian slave-girl named Hagar. According to the custom of the time, this girl was Sarah's property and her children could be considered as Sarah's children.

By choosing to name the central character of her novel after this little known figure in Genesis, Mrs. Laurence empha-

sizes Hagar's distinguishing characteristic.

When Hagar, the maid-slave becomes pregnant she adopts a haughty manner toward her mistress and makes life intolerable for Sarah. The latter therefore receives permission from Abraham to discipline her. 3

In the Bible pride is the very root and essence of sin. The Old Testament condemnation of the proud and commendation of the lowly was a fundamental principle of Christ's teaching. Hagar Currie's lessons in pride are learned from her father, Manawaka's leading merchant. In a flashback Hagar remembers "strutting the board sidewalk like a pint-sized peacock, resplendent, haughty, hoity-toity, Jason Currie's black-haired daughter."⁴ The ability later to camouflage her positive response to her husband's lovemaking only reinforces this aloofness. "I prided myself upon keeping my pride intact, like some maidenhead." (SA, p. 81)

To describe the growing friction between father and daughter caused by this mutual trait, Mrs. Laurence introduces the metaphor of the Pharoah. In the memory which opens the novel Hagar recalls the statue which surmounted her mother's grave, "that my father bought in pride to mark her bones and proclaim his dynasty." (SA, p. 3) It was carved by Italian stone masons who gauged "with admirable accuracy the needs of fledgling pharoahs in an uncouth land." (SA, p. 3) Pharoah's daughter, though anonymous, is commemorated in Biblical history for her unique act of salvation. Challenging the cruel edict of her

royal father, who had ordered the destruction of all male Israelite children,⁵ she rescued the infant Moses from his watery cache and raised him as her own son. When Hagar Currie returns to Manawaka from the ladies' academy in Toronto, she is personified as "Pharoah's daughter reluctantly returning to his roof" (SA, p. 43) and subsequently defies her father by marrying Brampton Shipley.⁶

As Bram's first wife had produced only daughters, he like Abraham (whose original name was Abram) longs for a male heir.

"Why should you care if it's a boy?"
I asked.

Bram looked at me as though he wondered how I could have needed to ask.

"It would be somebody to leave the place to," he said.

I saw then with amazement that he wanted his dynasty no less than my father had.

(SA, pp. 100-101)

In common with the Biblical *mariage de convenance* of Hagar and Abraham, the Shipley's marriage has little to commend it but a sexual fulfillment which neither will acknowledge. Bram was "the only person close to me who ever thought of me by my name, not daughter, nor sister, nor mother, nor even wife, but Hagar, always." (SA, p. 80) This comment reveals Hagar's inability to establish herself through personal relations or family ties. Pride and self-interest motivates her to such a degree that she progressively isolates herself

by confronting, defying and alienating herself from each generation.

Hagar's air of superiority in Genesis is directly responsible for her expulsion into the wilderness. Though she is encouraged by a divine messenger to return to Abraham's household, it is not long before the rivalry between her son Ishmael and Isaac, the son eventually born to Sarah, produces such divisions that Hagar is once again ordered to leave, this time accompanied by her son.

Several elements of this Biblical legend are used to structure the organization of *The Stone Angel*. Though Hagar Shipley's two exiles are self-imposed, she too is the victim of jealousy and pride. Her decision to leave Bram and live with her son John on the west coast is justified by her contention that Bram has not treated his sons equally.

It had been Bram and Marvin, the two of them, for years. You'd think Bram would have paid more heed to John after Marvin left, but not a bit of it.

(SA, p. 130)

The contrast between the Shipley boys suggests a comparison with Esau and Jacob, twin grandsons of Abraham. Marvin, slow and plodding, has his father's approval while the wily John is his mother's favorite. In her devotion to John, Hagar is as determined as Rebekah, the mother who inaugurated one of history's classic deceptions by encouraging Jacob to obtain

his brother's birthright.

There are some women, and Rebekah is the first on record, who develop a fanatic passion for their children which far outweighs any love they ever felt for their husbands. 7

When Hagar does return years later to Bram's house she is confronted by John whose dissolute way of life is not only a grim reminder of those habits she found so abhorrent in her husband but also a tragic fulfillment of the Biblical prophesy that Hagar's son "will be a wild man; his hand will be against every man, and every man's hand against him."⁸ Rather than acknowledge the similarity between her son and Ishmael, however, Hagar prefers to think of him in metaphors of Isaac and Jacob, Abraham's legal descendants and with him patriarchs of the Israelite nation.

Once when John was young Hagar followed him on a visit with his father to the boxed bee village. There she

saw Bram, taking out the full combs, cut a slab of waxen honey and hold it out, and the child opened his mouth, afraid to do otherwise, and stand stock-still and white, while the honeyed butcher knife ramm'd in, his father's generosity, offering sweetness on a steel that in another season slit the pig's carcasses.... The blade drew away with such slowness it seemed to be drawn out of my very flesh, and when I screamed at Bram, he turned, holding in his hands the knife still drizzling honey like blood, and his beard and mouth drew up into a jester's grin.

(SA, p. 125)

This bizarre re-enactment of the near-sacrifice of Isaac may be one of the few instances in which Mrs. Laurence strains the Biblical connection to the point of losing effectiveness. In response to God's command Abraham had been prepared to offer his son.

And Abraham stretched forth his hand, and took the knife to slay his son. And the angel of the Lord called unto him out of heaven, and said, Abraham, Abraham: and he said, Here am I. And he said, Lay not thine hand upon the lad, neither do thou any thing unto him: for now I know that thou fearest God, seeing thou hast not withheld thy son, thine only son from me. 9

In later years Hagar asks John to straighten the statue of the stone angel which had toppled over in the Manawaka cemetery.

I wish he could have looked like Jacob then, wrestling with the angel and besting it, wringing a blessing from it with his might. But no.

(SA, p. 179)

The archetype of this event has become a Biblical leitmotif in Mrs. Laurence's fiction. Jacob, whose life has been one of ruse and strategem, finally meets an adversary whose resistance far surpasses that offered by all previous rivals. As he wrestles with this mysterious stranger by the bank of a river, he realizes that this is no ordinary contest but a divine test of endurance.

And Jacob was left alone; and there wrestled a man with him until the breaking of the day. And when he saw that he prevailed not against him, he touched the hollow of his thigh; and the hollow of Jacob's thigh was out of joint, as he wrestled with him. And he said, Let me go, for the day breaketh. And he said, I will not let thee go, except thou bless me. 10

John's struggle with the statue is a visual representation of the continual contest of wills between mother and son.

The association of Hagar with the angel is by no means unexpected. When she begins to retrace the steps taken in ninety years, her earliest memory is the statue of the stone angel. It is the last thing she sees on the horizon when she leaves Manawaka with John. Near the end of the novel she pays a final visit to the cemetery where both she and the statue show the effect of time.

The angel was still standing there, but winters or lack of care had altered her. The earth had heaved with frost around her, and she stood askew and tilted. Her mouth was white. We didn't touch her. We only looked. Someday she'll topple entirely, and no one will bother to set her upright again.

(SA, p. 305)

The angel is blind, "doubly blind, not only stone but unendowed with even a pretense of sight." (SA, p. 3) Though Hagar has been unable and unwilling to see life from any perspective but her own, it is not until the traumatic

event of John's sudden death that she becomes one with the statue. "The night my son died I was transformed to stone and never wept at all." (SA, p. 243) Deprived of her last human contact, Hagar from that moment consigns herself to a bondage of isolation so complete that the possibility of deliverance seems extremely remote.

During even the brief interval that had elapsed between the writing of *This Side Jordan* and *The Stone Angel*, events in Africa made Margaret Laurence regretfully aware that the goal of independence might always remain beyond reach. And so in her thematic emphasis freedom as an abstract was altered to survival as an actuality.

With *The Stone Angel*, without my recognizing it at the time, 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. 11

The reminder of mortality provided by the nursing home revives Hagar's interest in survival and prompts her second flight, this time to the wilderness of Shadow Point. When her Biblical ancestor was banished to the desert God in His mercy provided her with water. In the New Testament water, "a universal need and a universal blessing, becomes a symbol of almost unlimited potentiality for the communication of distinctive Christian truth."¹² Though Hagar Shipley is near the ocean, there is ironically nothing to drink. The

timely arrival of Murray Lees,¹³ a fellow-traveller, allows her not only to quench her physical thirst but also to ^{satisfy} slake an emotional one. For the first time in all these years she unburdens the guilt associated with John's death and reaches out in sympathy to Mr. Lees in their mutual bereavement.

His jug of wine transforms the wilderness of the Old Testament into the upper room of the New Testament. Their communion takes place amidst suggestions of Christian symbolism in an abandoned fish cannery.¹⁴ From the early days of the church the fish has traditionally represented Christ and the Eucharist in Christian art and literature. The Greek word for fish (ΙΧΘΥΣ) is an acrostic for 'Jesus Christ, Son of God, Saviour.' There are also echoes in this scene of the Johannine account of the betrayal and arrest of Jesus following the Last Supper as Hagar pleads with Mr. Lees not to reveal her whereabouts. To Doris and Marvin, the captors who come to take her away, she says, "He'd not betray me. He did promise after all, and I believed him." (SA, p. 250) When the Saviour was arrested,

Then said Jesus unto Peter, Put up
thy sword into the sheath: the cup
which my Father hath given me, shall
I not drink it? 15

As Hagar is taken away she says, "A glass of water is really all I want." (SA, p. 250)

Though her flight began as an escape from reality, it actually becomes a journey into reality through struggling with the mystery of existence. It was in fact Hagar's opportunity to 'wrestle with the angel.' For it is only when Jacob

has striven with God and learnt his own weakness and surrendered his all into the hands of God, that he can learn the real name of God, and find Him to be forgiving and redeeming love. But such a wrestling and such a surrender is costly. Jacob is wrenched in the groin, and ever after limps upon his way. The old cleverness, the old self-confidence is gone, but it is replaced by a new peace of mind, a new humility, a new sense of serving not his own plans but God's austere and mighty purposes in history and for the human race. 16

For Hagar too the experience is costly as she must be taken directly to hospital. Though she still insists on directing her own destiny, with God relegated to the rank of one of the many adversaries in her life, she does achieve a kind of reconciliation of self and soul. Having broken the bonds of isolation she is no longer a stone angel. By receiving the gift of spiritual insight as a result of her 'wrestling,' she can assess the effect pride has had in her life.

This insight is fully revealed when she hears the final words of the doxology sung to her by Mr. Troy -- 'Come ye before Him and rejoice.' *Rejoice* is the operative word as

Hagar realizes that her emotional isolation had forced all joy to "a standstill by some brake of proper appearances."

(SA, p. 292)

This knowing comes upon me so forcefully, so shatteringly, and with such a bitterness as I have never felt before. I must always, always, have wanted that -- simply to rejoice.

(SA, p. 292)

In her personification as the Old Testament Hagar she confesses that

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

(SA, p. 292)

Her liberation began at the cannery with her response to Murray Lees and the recognition, "I am left with the feeling that it was a kind of mercy I encountered him." (SA, p. 253)

Margaret Laurence is able to avoid a total identification with Christian concepts by this kind of qualification. In its full theological meaning, mercy

connotes the idea of the free, gracious love of God, unmerited and undeserved, shown in Christ for us men and for our salvation. 17

This divine love contributes to God's grace which Mrs. Laurence uses as an analogy, though again qualified, to describe Hagar's revelation.

The final, almost grace, that is given to her in the very last moments of her life is that she realized that, although she has survived with pride and that this is her triumph and her strength, her terrible tragedy has been the inability to give or to receive affection and love and the inability to allow herself to experience joy. 18

In this light Hagar Shipley also reflects a New Testament significance as St. Paul uses the story of Abraham's two wives to illustrate the meaning of Christian salvation. To him Hagar symbolizes bondage to the literal interpretation of the Law rather than free observance of its spirit in Christ's law of love. Margaret Laurence's Hagar is similarly bound by her insistence on 'proper appearances.' In his Epistle to the Galatians Paul writes

For it is written, that Abraham had two sons, the one by a bondmaid, the other by a freewoman.... Which things are an allegory: for these are the two covenants; the one from the mount Sinai, which gendereth to bondage, which is Agar. For this Agar is mount Sinai in Arabia, and answereth to Jerusalem which now is, and is in bondage with her children. But Jerusalem which is above is free, which is the mother of us all.... So then, brethren, we are not children of the bondwoman, but of the free. Stand fast therefore in the liberty wherewith Christ hath made us free, and be not entangled again with the yoke of bondage. 19

The symbolism in this passage links *The Stone Angel* with two subsequent novels, *A Jest of God* and *The Diviners*, both of which use the Biblical concept of the heavenly Jerusalem.

Though Hagar can think of only two acts from her ninety years that were truly free, both were committed in the spirit of Paul's interpretation of the law -- "all the law is fulfilled in one word, even in this; Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself."²⁰ While she refers to her foray for a bedpan as a joke, it is nevertheless a self-sacrificing gesture of kindness for her hospital room-mate. Hagar suggests that her second act, the restoration of Marvin's lost birthright,

was a lie -- yet not a lie, for it was spoken at least and at last with what may perhaps be a kind of love.

(SA, p. 307)

Even though she does not really believe that Marvin has been a better son than John, she gives him the satisfaction of hearing her say so. For it is Marvin who now takes his turn as Jacob, asking for her blessing of forgiveness after a lifetime of struggling.

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

(SA, p. 304) pg 271

Her deliverance finally achieved, Hagar now takes the glass of water she had longed for at the cannery. Unlike the other women in the hospital who call on the Blessed Virgin to 'pray for us now and at the hour of our death'

ELVA JARDINER
No!
Sandra Wong

or ask God for redemption -- *Mein Gott, erlöse mich* -- Hagar
faces death with her characteristic independence. In a final
echo of the Jacob metaphor she tells God, "*Bless me or not,
Lord, just as You please, for I'll not beg.*" (SA, p. 307) In
a Biblical context her final act reflects the words of the
Psalmist who wrote, "I will take the cup of salvation, and
call upon the name of the Lord."²¹ Hagar's salvation gives
her the strength required for the final conflict. "Death is
swallowed up in victory"²² and Hagar, whose name in Hebrew
means 'wandering,' comes triumphantly home.

FOOTNOTES

¹Margaret Laurence, quoted by Donald Cameron in "Margaret Laurence: The Black Celt Speaks of Freedom," *Conversations with Canadian Novelists* (Toronto: Macmillan, 1973), Part I, p. 113.

²Gen. 12:1-2.

³John Van Seters, *Abraham in History and Tradition* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1975), p. 192.

⁴Margaret Laurence, *The Stone Angel* (1964; rpt. Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1968), p. 6. Hereafter abbreviated as SA.

⁵See Exod. 1:7-22.

⁶Through several references to Egypt Mrs. Laurence consolidates the comparison of Hagar Shipley to both the Biblical Hagar and to Pharoah's daughter. One of these references, however, is not scriptural but Romantic in origin -- "I the Egyptian not dancing now with rowanberries in her hair" (p. 40). In addition to Browning's Pippa (p. 5), Keats' Meg Merrilies (p. 151) and Coleridge's albatross (p. 186), Mrs. Laurence has borrowed a metaphor from J.M. Barrie's *The Little Minister* to describe the Reverend Mr. Troy as Gavin Dishart and Hagar as Babbie, 'the wild gypsy of Windyghoul.'

⁷H.V. Morton, *Women of the Bible* (London: Methuen and Co., 1940), p. 35.

⁸Gen. 16:12.

⁹Gen. 22:10-12.

¹⁰Gen. 32:24-26.

¹¹Margaret Laurence, "Ten Years' Sentences," *Canadian Literature*, 41 (Summer 1969), p. 14.

¹²F.W. Dillistone, *Traditional Symbols in the Contemporary World* (London: Epworth Press, 1973), pp. 27-28.

¹³ Notice the significance of Mrs. Laurence's choice of name as Murray Lees suggests his function in the novel will be to release.

¹⁴ Though the presence of the seagull in the cannery (p. 217) might be thought of as a symbol of the Holy Spirit, traditionally a dove, it is more likely intended as a reflection of Hagar's floundering and a foreboding that 'a bird in the house means a death in the house.'

¹⁵ John 18:11.

¹⁶ Stanley Brice Frost, *Patriarchs and Prophets* (Montreal: McGill University Press, 1963), p. 32.

¹⁷ *A Dictionary of Christian Theology*, ed. Alan Richardson (London: S.C.M. Press, 1957), p. 220.

¹⁸ Margaret Laurence, quoted by Clara Thomas in "A Conversation about Literature: An Interview with Margaret Laurence and Irving Layton," *Journal of Canadian Fiction*, 1 (Winter 1972), p. 68.

¹⁹ Gal. 4:22-26, 31 and 5:1. Note: 'Agar' is the Greek form of 'Hagar.'

²⁰ Gal. 5:14.

²¹ Psalm 116:13.

²² I Cor. 15:54.

SURVIVAL IN THE MANAWAKA NOVELS

II. A JEST OF GOD

If any man among you seemeth to be wise
in this world, let him become a fool,
that he may be wise.

I Corinthians 3:18

Manawaka revisited provides the impulse for Margaret Laurence's second Canadian novel, *A Jest of God* (1966). As in her previous book the protagonist is a woman in isolation but at that point the similarity ends. When juxtaposed Hagar Shipley and Rachel Cameron present a study in chiaroscuro: a ninety-year old matriarch replete with life beside a thirty-four-year old spinster who has not yet tasted it; a determined mother who overrules everyone she encounters next to a vulnerable child whom all overrule; one woman motivated by a surfeit of pride, the other by an excess of humility. Their nomenclature, by no means random, places them squarely in the context of the patriarchal sagas of Genesis and, like their Biblical counterparts, they come from different generations.

Both Hagar and Rachel were part of a society that considered childlessness to be the ultimate calamity. "In ancient Israel, to have many children was a coveted honour, and the wedding guests often expressed the wish that the couple would

be blessed with a large family."¹ The ancient Israelites believed that their immortality was realized through their descendants. Sterility, therefore, meant not only sorrow but humiliation and shame to the woman affected and was often interpreted as a chastisement from God. This conviction worked in Hagar's favour as her fertility was welcomed by her barren mistress, Sarah, but not in Rachel's. Her infertility immortalizes her in the history of Israel as a symbol of wistfulness and sorrow. In the New Testament when Herod orders the slaying of the holy innocents, this savage act is seen as the fulfillment of a prophecy of Jeremiah.

In Rama was there a voice heard, lamentation, and weeping, and great mourning, Rachel weeping for her children, and would not be comforted, because they are not. 2

At first the Biblical Rachel's life appears to hold great promise. When Jacob travels to his mother's country to find a wife, he falls in love at first sight of his "beautiful and well favoured"³ cousin, Rachel, the younger daughter of Laban. In order to marry her he offers himself in service to his uncle.

And Jacob served seven years for Rachel; and they seemed unto him but a few days, for the love he had to her. 4

However, Laban, who was as crafty in his day as Mrs. Cameron is in hers, substitutes his older daughter, Leah, in the wedding

ceremony. Such duplicity understandably heightens the rivalry between sisters. Rachel Cameron has a younger sibling's envy of her sister, Stacey, married and a mother of four.

She's very decisive, is Stacey. She knew right from the start what she wanted most, which was to get as far away from Manawaka as possible. She didn't lose a moment in doing it.

My great mistake was in being born the younger. 5

Though Stacey seldom revisits Manawaka she does maintain contact with her family there through weekly letters. Rachel resents her mother's praise of Stacey's correspondence, remarking scornfully in her continual interior monologue, "Considering that Stacey does nothing else for Mother, writing once a week doesn't seem such an exorbitant effort." (*JG*, p. 21)

In the Bible Rachel too is allowed to marry Jacob but with both sisters sharing the same husband, jealousy is inevitable. God compensates for Jacob's lack of affection for Leah by rewarding her with children. "And when the Lord saw that Leah was hated, he opened her womb: but Rachel was barren."⁶ When Leah has four sons Rachel cries with desperation.

And when Rachel saw that she bare Jacob no children, Rachel envied her sister; and said unto Jacob, Give me children, or else I die. 7

Her cry is echoed some thirty-five centuries later by Rachel Cameron who longs for a child of her own. The return of Nick

Kazlik to Manawaka holds the promise of this wish.

'Nick --'

'Mm?'

'If I had a child, I would like it to be yours.'

This seems so unforced that I feel he must see it the way I do. And so restrained, as well, when I might have torn at him --
Give me my children.

(*JG*, p. 148)

Jacob answers Rachel with annoyance.

And Jacob's anger was kindled against Rachel: and he said, Am I in God's stead, who hath withheld from thee the fruit of the womb? 8

Nick's reply to Rachel is couched in the same phraseology.

His face turns away from mine. He puts his mouth momentarily on my shoulder. Then, still not looking at me, he brushes a hand across my forehead.

'Darling,' he says, 'I'm not God. I can't solve anything.'

(*JG*, p. 148)

Though at first Rachel appears to be the victim of a spinster's frustration, a closer study reveals that her problem is really one of bondage. Fear and apprehension have retarded her maturity, locking her into the role of eternal child. Margaret Laurence's concern for personal liberation is the keystone of her writing. In the African stories she demonstrated that political freedom did not automatically generate individual liberty. Nor did personal isolation, as Hagar Shipley discovered too late. Rachel's dilemma is the reverse as she is dominated by the various 'parent' figures

in her life. Helpless in escaping from the clutches of her own mother, Rachel envies the less conventional relationship of Grace and James Doherty. When the principal, Willard Siddley, objects to Rachel's reluctance in insisting that the Dohertys conform, he admonishes her as a parent would a child.

'We don't *know* that, Rachel, do we?' Willard says.

'I would venture to put forth the opinion that under the circumstances it is decidedly worth a try. We must not let our emotions get the better of us, must we?' Willard has won. Maybe he is even right. He has two of his own. Could I be expected to know what is best?

'Good girl,' Willard says.

(*JG*, p. 25)

Her colleague, Calla Mackie, regards her affectionately as a child yet longs to possess her.

'Hallo, child.'

Calla. I wish she wouldn't call me *child*. It sounds ridiculous. I've asked her not to, but she doesn't stop.

(*JG*, p. 9)

When Rachel rejects her advances, their relationship alters.

She pushes the tea cup towards me, across the table. She used to put the sugar and cream in my tea, for me, but she does not do that now. Another thing -- she does not say *child* any more. Only *Rachel*. As though formality or great care had been forced upon her. I've wanted her to stop saying *child* or *kid* for a long time, yet now I feel unreasonably bereft.

(*JG*, p. 46)

The person who presents the greatest threat to Rachel's survival is her neurotic mother who makes constant demands on her time. She expects a lifetime of service from her daughter as did Laban from his family.

After twenty years Jacob decides it is time for his household to leave Laban's employ but his prospective departure is not received with favour. Forced to leave by stealth, Jacob avoids Laban's wrath only by divine intervention. The role of Jacob in this novel is taken by Nick Kazlik, a foil character for Rachel. Together they represent a cross-section of Manawaka as "Half the town is Scots descent and the other half is Ukrainian." (*JG*, p. 65) Though ethnic differences kept them apart as children, they now become as one in the struggle to become independent from their families. Nick is not only Rachel's lover but also like Jacob a twin. He too senses that his father preferred his more easygoing older brother. Mr. Kazlik mistakenly calls him 'Steve' though Nick attributes this not to "some sad slip of the tongue or mind"⁹ (*JG*, p. 142) but rather to a deliberate attempt to coerce him to remain on the farm.

Both Nick and Rachel want to escape the confines of the family home. To convey their moments of greatest intensity, Mrs. Laurence relies on Biblical language. When Rachel must resort to subterfuge to leave the house, she paraphrases John

8:32 -- "Whoever said the truth shall make you free never knew this kind of house." (JG, p. 100) The Song of Solomon, the Old Testament book of love poetry, is the source of Rachel's thoughts when phoning Nick.

*I adjure you, O daughters of Jerusalem,
by the roes and by the hinds of the
field, that ye stir not up, nor awaken
love, until it please. 10*

(JG, pp. 131-132)

Nick expresses his frustrations in the words of Jeremiah.

*'I have forsaken my house -- I have
left mine heritage -- mine heritage is
unto me as a lion in the forest -- it
crieth out against me -- therefore
have I hated it.' 11*

(JG, p. 110)

Rachel envisions Nick as a Jacob who will liberate her from her mother through the traditional rescue of marriage; if not marriage then at least through the alternative, albeit less socially acceptable, of pregnancy. Can he be her Saviour? "She was looking for an Old Testament's patriarch god, a father-figure who would direct and protect her, and she was also looking for a New Testament's Christ who would redeem her and, quite literally, make her new."¹² When Nick refutes this role by saying 'I'm not God,' he acknowledges that he cannot be the means to Rachel's goal. Or, in the author's words,

To Nick, Rachel does not at first seem anything except a fairly attractive and intelligent woman, and it is only when

Rachel reveals her deep uncertainties to him that he perceives how desperate is her need and how little he can fulfil it. No one could fulfil it -- she needs too much.... 13

The figure who eventually does release her is her own father, whose wisdom is revealed to her by Hector Jonas, his successor in the undertaking business. Hector's role in this novel is a catalytic one, as was Murray F. Lees' in *The Stone Angel*. Jonas, the Greek form of Jonah, was the reluctant prophet commissioned as a Hebrew missionary to the heathens in Ninevah. The Old Testament book of Jonah contains the story of his attempted escape by sea, his punishment of being thrown overboard and swallowed by a great fish (the 'whale'), his deliverance after three days and nights and the final accomplishment of his mission. In New Testament times the 'sign of Jonah' was regarded as a prophecy of Christ's resurrection.

Mrs. Laurence presages the significance of Jonas in the novel's epigraph, the opening stanza of "Losers" by Carl Sandburg.

If I should pass the tomb of Jonah
I would stop there and sit for awhile;
Because I was swallowed one time deep in the dark
And came out alive after all. 14

For a long time Rachel has been puzzled about her father's life and work. The night she visits Hector in his 'tomb' under the Camerons' apartment proves as enlightening an experience for her as the night Hagar spent in the abandoned cannery with Mr.

Lees. Though the former scene evokes the Old Testament and the latter the New Testament, the significance is the same. When the outcome of events seems doomed, the saving grace of God intervenes, turning defeat into victory. As a child Rachel had been forbidden to enter this place of death.

It was in those rooms on the ground floor there, where I was told never to go, that my father lived away his life. All I could think of, then, was the embarrassment of being the daughter of someone with his stock-in-trade. It never occurred to me to wonder about him, and whether he possibly felt at ease with them, the unspeaking ones, and out of place above in our house, things being what they were. I never had a chance to ask him.

(JG, pp. 13-14)

As an adult she puts the question to Hector who replies, "'But I would bet he had the kind of life he wanted most.'" (JG, p. 124)

Hector Jonas, who has for so long plied his trade below while I tried to live above. Comic prophet, dwarf seer. *The life he wanted most*. If my father had wanted otherwise, it would have been otherwise.

(JG, p. 124)

The salience of survival, which for Mrs. Laurence's characters includes a powerful will to live, is made more striking by the ubiquity of death. In *The Stone Angel* there were constant references to the cemetery in Manawaka.

Rachel once saw a couple making love near the same cemetery and is probably reminded of that embrace when Nick takes her to a field where "it's as private as the grave." (*JG*, p. 90) Unfortunately for Rachel their relationship does not produce a child though for a time she believes it will. Once pregnancy seems a reality, however, she is overwhelmed by fear and considers abortion. She even contemplates suicide but rejects both alternatives in favour of life. Earlier she had also rejected God --

I didn't say God hadn't died recently, within the last few years, but a long time ago, longer than I could remember, for I could not actually recall a time when He was alive.

(*JG*, p. 39)

-- but now she calls on his aid.

I am not praying -- if that is what I am doing -- out of belief. Only out of need. Not faith, or belief, or the feeling of deserving anything. None of that seems to be so.

Help me.

(*JG*, p. 171)

She is helped, but in a manner unexpected. When her doctor confirms that she is not pregnant but does have a tumour, her reaction to this 'jest of God' is like an earlier Rachel's.

My speaking voice, and then only that other voice, wordless and terrible, the voice of some woman mourning for her children.

(*JG*, p. 181)

In the Bible barrenness often preceded the birth of a child who would alter the course of history. In the Old Testament it

was Sarah and Isaac; in the New Testament, Elizabeth and John the Baptist. The Biblical Rachel never gives up hope¹⁵ and is eventually rewarded with the birth of a son, Joseph, the most outstanding of Jacob's twelve sons and the man responsible for leading the Israelites into Egypt. Her story ends in tragedy as she dies when her second child, Benjamin, is born. Rachel Cameron is more fortunate as her tumour is benign. While in the hospital she, like Hagar Shipley before her, makes a decision that will guarantee a more rewarding survival in the days remaining to her.

Like Jacob she has wrestled with the angel and emerges from the encounter with renewed purpose. Her emotional release in the Tabernacle and her affair with Nick had freed her from spiritual pride.

No, I have no pride. None left, not now. This realization renders me all at once calm, inexplicably, and almost free.

(JG, p. 142)

Under the anaesthetic she reveals her new role -- "*I am the mother now.*" (JG, p. 184) The child has become parent and can now make decisions for both herself and her mother. The first evidence of this new-found freedom is her announcement that they will leave Manawaka, thus symbolically shedding the past as did Hagar, Vanessa and Stacey. Hagar had been bound by chains of pride, Rachel by chains of fear. In the author's words,

The great thing at the end was not that her life was going to change totally, but that she had at least lost some of her fear; she wasn't, for example, afraid of looking like a fool any more, which was a kind of liberation, and her role with herself and her mother had in a sense reversed. She realized she was not about to leave her mother. She was going to look after her, but she realized that she was in the mother role now. 16

When St. Paul said that one had to become a fool to be wise, he used the word *μωρός* meaning 'rebel,' rather than *ἄφρων* meaning 'witless.' Calla applies his advice to reassess her approach to glossalalia while Rachel uses it to justify her personal rebellion. Like the liberated Hagar she is now able to rejoice. In the words of Psalm 51 she exclaims.

*Make me to hear joy and gladness,
that the bones which Thou hast broken
may rejoice. 17*

(JG, p. 201)

Rejoicing is also part of Paul's message to the Galatians.

For it is written, Rejoice, thou barren that bearest not; break forth and cry, thou that travailest not: for the desolate hath many more children than she which hath an husband. 18

Through the redemptive life and death of Christ, all people are made free and will enter the heavenly city, symbol of perfect freedom and maternal protection. "Jerusalem which is above is free, which is the mother of us all."¹⁹

The earthly Jerusalem was the religious center of the

Jews. Built atop Mount Zion it was the site of their national shrine, the Temple erected by Solomon. For Christians the theological significance of Jerusalem ceased to be attached to the Temple and consisted instead in the death and resurrection of Christ which took place there and the thought of the New Jerusalem that should be. The heavenly Jerusalem is God's perfect and eternal order of the future, as described in the hymn, "Jerusalem the golden," which Rachel hears in church. Mrs. Laurence describes the inspirational effect of such hymns on both her characters and herself.²⁰

A lot of my characters, like myself, inhabit a world in which they no longer believe in the teachings of the traditional church, but where these things have enormous emotional impact on them still, as they do on me. Part of the terrific impact of things like the hymns derives from the fact that you learned these things in a much earlier era of your life, an era of rock-solid faith. Now you *lost* this: and part of the impact is not that you believe it, but you mourn your disbelief. This is Eden lost. 21

At the beginning of this novel Jerusalem is inferred by the children's skipping rhyme:

Rachel Cameron says she'll die
For the want of the golden city.
She is handsome, she is pretty,
She is the queen of the golden city --

(JG, p. 1)

By the end of the novel the golden city is open to Rachel who can enter with those citizens who also have wrestled with life's perplexities and emerged victorious.

APPENDIX A

"Losers"

by Carl Sandburg from
Smoke and Steel (1920)

If I should pass the tomb of Jonah
I would stop there and sit for a while;
Because I was swallowed one time deep in the dark
And came out alive after all.

If I pass the burial spot of Nero
I shall say to the wind, "well, well!" --
I who have fiddled in a world on fire,
I who have done so many stunts not worth the doing.

I am looking for the grave of Sinbad too.
I want to shake his ghost-hand and say,
"Neither of us died very early, did we?"

And the last sleeping-place of Nebuchadnezzar --
When I arrive there I shall tell the wind:
"You ate grass; I have eaten crow --
Who is better off now or next year?"

Jack Cade, John Brown, Jesse James,
There too I could sit down and stop for a while.
I think I could tell their headstones:
"God, let me remember all good losers."

I could ask people to throw ashes on their heads
In the name of that sergeant at Belleau Woods,
Walking into the drumfires, calling his men,
"Come on, you ... Do you want to live forever?"

APPENDIX B

"Urbs Sion aurea"

translated from Bernard
of Cluny (12th C.) by
John Mason Neale (1818-
1866)

- 1 Jerusalem the golden,
 With milk and honey blest,
Beneath thy contemplation
 Sink heart and voice opprest.
I know not, O, I know not
 What joys await us there,
What radiancy of glory,
 What bliss beyond compare.

- 2 They stand, those halls of Sion,
 All jubilant with song,
And bright with many an angel,
 And all the martyr throng;
The Prince is ever with them,
 The daylight is serene,
The pastures of the blessed
 Are decked in glorious sheen.

- 3 There is the throne of David;
 And there, from care released,
The shout of them that triumph,
 The song of them that feast;
And they, who with their Leader
 Have conquered in the fight,
For ever and for ever
 Are clad in robes of white.

- 4 O sweet and blessed country,
 The home of God's elect!
O sweet and blessed country
 That eager hearts expect!
Jesu, in mercy bring us
 To that dear land of rest;
Who art, with God the father
 And Spirit, ever blest.

FOOTNOTES

¹ Roland de Vaux, *Ancient Israel: Its Life and Institutions*, trans. John McHugh (1961; rpt. London: Darton, Longman and Todd, 1973), p. 41.

² Matt. 2:18. Cf. Jer. 31:15.

³ Gen. 29:17.

⁴ Gen. 29:20.

⁵ Margaret Laurence, *A Jest of God* (1966; rpt. Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1974), p. 11. Hereafter abbreviated as *JG*.

⁶ Gen. 29:31.

⁷ Gen. 30:1.

⁸ Gen. 30:2.

⁹ Cf. Gen. 27.

¹⁰ Cf. Song 2:7.

¹¹ Cf. Jer. 12:7-8.

¹² Clara Thomas, *The Manawaka World of Margaret Laurence* (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1975), p. 90.

¹³ Margaret Laurence, quoted by Clara Thomas in *The Manawaka World of Margaret Laurence*, pp. 93-94.

¹⁴ See Appendix A which contains "Losers" in its entirety. Mrs. Laurence also uses part of this poem for the epigraph of her next novel.

¹⁵ Rachel's persistent faith is described in Genesis 30:8. "And Rachel said, With great wrestlings have I wrestled with my sister, and I have prevailed:" According to a gloss in *The Interpreter's Bible*, the original verse stated that Rachel had wrestled with God, thus equating her experience with Jacob's.

¹⁶ Margaret Laurence, quoted by Graeme Gibson in "Margaret Laurence," *Eleven Canadian Novelists* (Toronto: Anansi, 1973), p. 201.

¹⁷ Cf. Psalm 51:8.

¹⁸ Gal. 4:27.

¹⁹ Gal. 4:26.

²⁰ See Appendix B which contains the entire hymn. It recurs in *The Diviners*.

²¹ Margaret Laurence, quoted by Donald Cameron in "Margaret Laurence: The Black Celt Speaks of Freedom," *Conversations with Canadian Novelists* (Toronto: Macmillan, 1973), Part I, p. 112.

SURVIVAL IN THE MANAWAKA NOVELS

III. THE FIRE-DWELLERS

Who among us shall dwell with the
devouring fires? who among us shall
dwell with everlasting burnings?

Isaiah 33:14

Initially it would appear that *The Fire-Dwellers* (1969) marks a change in direction for Margaret Laurence. The novel's setting has been shifted west from Manawaka to Vancouver, "jewel of the Pacific Northwest."¹ While Hagar and Rachel moved in the timeless archetypal patterns of Genesis, Stacey MacAindra is a character created *de novo*, a byproduct of the temporal maelstrom of contemporary life. Like her sister, Rachel, who longed to be "queen of the golden city" (*JG*, p. 1), Stacey too once had regal fantasies. As a child she imagined herself as "Anastasia, princess of all the Russias; Anastasia, queen of the Hebrides, soon to inherit the ancestral castle in the craggy isles." (*FD*, p. 95) Though the choice of Stacey's name may have been unintentional,² it is significant that 'anastasis' refers to both the representation in Byzantine art of Christ harrowing hell and the Greek word for 'resurrection.'

As a fundamental tenet of Christian belief, resurrection refers to Christ's resurrection and the resurrection of the dead.

The first resurrection took place after Christ's death on the cross and descent into hell where he preached "unto the spirits in prison,"³ those departed souls who had not had the opportunity to hear his Gospel. His subsequent return from hell is proof that he has conquered death and entered into glory and becomes a paradigm for his followers.

For since by man came death, by man
came also the resurrection of the
dead. For as in Adam all die, even
so in Christ shall all be made alive. 4

All men will be raised from the dead and brought to life again at the end of history when Christ will come in glory to judge the living and the departed. This day of Last Judgment is described in the last book of the Bible in a series of apocalyptic visions dominated by the imagery of fire.

Before Margaret Laurence's heroines can achieve even a partial victory in life they must submit to a test of endurance just as Jacob was forced to wrestle with the Angel. Stacey "is concerned with survival, like Hagar and like Rachel, but in her case it involves living in an external world which she perceives as increasingly violent and indeed lunatic."⁵ Before Stacey's survival can be made meaningful, she must first reckon with interior and exterior conflicts which she characterizes as fires -- "Will the fires go on inside and out?" (*FD*, p. 307) Fire in its many forms thus becomes the primary motif in this novel and resurrection becomes an appropriate theme for Stacey's evolution

from death to life.

Death always seems to find a place in Margaret Laurence's fiction, perhaps because of the number of deaths in her own family when she was very young. To accentuate the eschatological overtones of this novel, the deaths which affect Stacey are manifold and violent. Distant violence from the battlefields of Vietnam is brought into her house by the media.

EIGHT-THIRTY NEWS BOMBERS LAST NIGHT
CLAIMED A DECISIVE VICTORY FOUR VIL-
LAGES TOTALLY DESTROYED AND A NUMBER
OF OTHERS SET ABLAZE

(*FD*, p. 94)

Stacey witnesses a young boy killed by a car. Her neighbour, Tess Fogler, attempts suicide. Mac's wartime buddy, Buckle Fennick, is killed on the highway when he plays 'chicken' once too often in his diesel truck. When the MacAindras go to the morgue, "the chapel of the violent dead holding its eternal hours, crash and stab not knowing nine to five," (*FD*, p. 235) to identify Buckle's body, Stacey is reminded that as the daughter of an undertaker she has never been far from death. Now she finds herself "frightened to death of life" (*FD*, p. 244) and haunted by the fear that disaster will befall her children.

This fear is echoed by the nursery rhyme which opens the novel and becomes Stacey's leitmotif.

Ladybird, ladybird,
 Fly away home;
 Your house is on fire,
 Your children are gone.

(FD, p. 3)

The 'ever-open eye' of the television reflects so many real cities on fire and actual children dead that Stacey feels the violence of the world is fast approaching her own city. She fears "the day when you open your door and find they've been filming those pictures in your street." (FD, p. 305) With the exception of *A Bird in the House* (which the author admits is 'fictionalized autobiography'), this novel marks the first time that Mrs. Laurence has come perilously close to identifying with her protagonist as both women are vitally concerned with the effect of the world's violence on innocent children.

In a book titled *The New Romans* Mrs. Laurence has submitted an article which she wrote after seeing two newspaper photographs. The same pictures are mentioned in *The Fire-Dwellers*. One depicts the horrors of napalm.

Then I recalled another newspaper photograph. It was of a North Vietnamese woman. Some marvelous new kind of napalm had just come into use. I do not understand the technicalities. This substance when it alights flaming onto skin cannot be removed. It adheres. The woman was holding a child who looked about eighteen months old, and she was trying to pluck something away from the burn-blackening area on the child's face. 6

The other was a picture of Joe Bass, a Negro boy the age of

Mrs. Laurence's son, David.

There was this newspaper picture of this boy some city in the States kid about twelve Negro kid you know shot by accident it said by the police in a riot and he was just lying there not dead but lying with his arm cradled up in a dark pool his blood and his eyes were wide open and you wondered what he was seeing. His parents cared about him as much as I do about my kids, no doubt, and worried about what might happen to him, but that didn't stop it happening. You think I'm silly to think about I can't help it 7

(FD, p. 193)

The only solution that Mrs. Laurence can offer is the power of communication. Quoting St. John's Gospel she affirms that her credo is

a faith in the word. *In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.* The kind of belief that many writers have -- the belief that if we are to make ourselves known to one another, if we are really to know the reality of another, we must communicate with what is almost the only means we have -- human speech. 8

When there is no communication individuals can atrophy. Hagar Shipley was so isolated from others by her pride that she was figuratively transformed to stone. Fear preserved Rachel Cameron in perpetual childhood. The inability of Stacey MacAindra to communicate with her family consigns her to a life in hell. "Everybody should stop from time to time and explain what they mean. But none of us in this house do." (FD, p. 69)

Though the most obvious example is the non-verbal two-year-old Jen, "determined not to communicate," (FD, p. 5) Stacey finds herself constantly at cross purposes with her three other children and her husband, Mac. She refrains from speaking openly to her neighbours or to Matthew, her father-in-law, for fear of offending them.

And yet I long to tell him I don't
see life his way -- gentle Jesus
meek and mild and God's in his heav-
en all's right with the world. But
I can't.

(FD, p. 65)

The only person Stacey can talk freely with is God, but He is also her judge. "I don't want to, but I seem to believe in a day of judgment, just like all my Presbyterian forebears did," (FD, p. 265) says Stacey. In Revelation the Day of Judgment is heralded by four horsemen. As the holocaust of the late 1960's seems to portend the end of history, Stacey wonders "What will happen when the horsemen of the Apocalypse ride through this town?" (FD, p. 56)

At the Day of Judgment, God will say
*Stacey MacAindra, what have you done
with your life?* And I'll say, *Well,
let's see, Sir, I think I loved my kids.*
And He'll say, *Are you certain about
that?* And I'll say, *God, I'm not cer-
tain about anything any more.*

(FD, pp. 10-11)

What is certain is that not only is the world's violence fast approaching Stacey but also the fires of judgment.

Though the best known description of judgment by fire is found in Revelation, fire is used throughout the Bible as a symbol of condemnation and punishment. Sodom and Gomorrah were destroyed by fire⁹ as well as the city of Babylon.¹⁰ However, the Bible does not present an unequivocal concept of the city. Though it can on one hand be the habitation of all that is vile and oppressive in human life and is judged accordingly, on the other hand it may be a lovely and noble place, such as the earthly Jerusalem.¹¹ Mrs. Laurence uses both views of the city in her work. In the previous two novels Vancouver was idealized as a haven for Hagar and Rachel who sought refuge from the confines of Manawaka. In *The Fire-Dwellers* their ideal is exposed in harsh reality, though there is an occasional vestige of the earlier view.

The buildings at the heart of the city are brash, flashing with colors, solid and self-confident. Stacey is reassured by them, until she looks again and sees them charred, open to the impersonal winds, glass and steel broken like vulnerable live bones, shadows of people frog-splayed on the stone like in that other city.

(FD, p. 11)

In the twentieth century Margaret Laurence questions the actions of the Americans, the 'new Romans.' In the first century St. John of Patmos castigated the Romans of his day through the use of Babylon as a metaphor for Rome. The particular object of his attack was the Roman emperor, Nero, persecuter of

the Christians in his city.¹² In the epigraph to her novel Mrs. Laurence borrows the second stanza of Carl Sandburg's "Losers"¹³ with its traditional picture of Nero fiddling in a world on fire. There is also a Nero-figure in Stacey's inferno in the person of Thor Thorlakson. Named after the Norse god of thunder and lightning, he is the nearest Margaret Laurence comes to portraying evil in her fiction. As Mac's callous superior in the Richalife Vitamin Company he presents a potential threat to the MacAindras' future. Although elegantly groomed and overwhelmingly confident, he is nonetheless identified immediately by Stacey as a diabolical foe. His name conveys reverberations of the thunder which accompanies the war between good and evil forces in Revelation. To Stacey he is a "refugee from the discards of Lucifer's army" (*FD*, p. 107) and a "bat-winged Mephistopheles." (*FD*, p. 44)

In *The Stone Angel* Mrs. Laurence's description of John Shipley wrestling with the statue was a mock-epic of Jacob and the Angel. The confrontation between Stacey and the satanic Thor at an office cocktail party, a parallel to Christ's temptation in the wilderness,¹⁴ is presented in much the same fashion. Her reference to stigmata is brushed humourously aside by Thor. When Stacey later burns her hand on the stove she calls the wound "My brand of stigmata." (*FD*, p. 140) However, Stacey does not possess the power *per se* to defeat

Thor. He is unmasked through the intervention of another thunder-character.

In each novel Mrs. Laurence customarily introduces a secondary character whose function is catalytic. Though the encounter between such a character and the protagonist may be brief, it is always highly significant because the heroine usually emerges with a revelation that will change the course of her life. The role played by Murray F. Lees and Hector Jonas in the previous two Manawaka novels is taken in *The Fire-Dwellers* by Valentine Tonnerre, a Métis whose name is the French word for 'thunder.' By exposing Thor Thorlakson as Vernon Winkler, once a runny-nosed boy in Manawaka, Val allays Stacey's fears for the security of Mac's job. The news is anticlimactic.

If we're scared, at least there is some dignity in being scared of genuine demons. Aren't there any demons left in hell? How in hell can we live without them?

(FD, p. 269)

Confronted with the presence of Valentine whose family has perished in an actual house fire¹⁵ and who is herself near death, Stacey is shocked out of her self-pity and imaginings of doom.

Though Margaret Laurence does stress the judgmental aspect of Biblical fire imagery in this novel, she also refers

specifically to two other occasions in scripture when fire is used metaphorically. St. Paul warns against the fires of lust when he tells the people of Corinth that

if they cannot contain, let them marry:
for it is better to marry than to burn. 16

Stacey admits that

Sometimes I think I'd like to hold an entire army between my legs. I think of all the men I'll never make love with, and I regret it as though it were the approach of my own death.

(FD, p. 19)

She is first attracted but soon repelled by Buckle Fennick. His deviate behaviour and false betrayal (complete with coins of silver, another instance of a Biblical analogy that seems unnecessary) combined with suspicions of Mac's infidelity provide Stacey with the justification to have an affair with Luke Venturi. With him she is free to communicate both verbally and physically. Like his Biblical namesake, the physician whose name means 'light-giving,' Luke restores Stacey to life through the power of love.¹⁷

If it hadn't been Luke, it would've been somebody else, sooner or later. But it was Luke, and now I want him again, even now already. Better to marry than burn, St. Paul said, but he didn't say what to do if you married *and* burned.

(FD, p. 211)

When Mac confesses that he has been unfaithful, Stacey is reminded of another Pauline reference to fire.

Therefore if thine enemy hunger, feed
 him; if he thirst, give him drink: for
 in so doing thou shalt heap coals of
 fire on his head. 18

Here Paul advises meeting hostility with active kindness as the pain thus inflicted may bring the enemy to repentance. As Stacey listens to Mac she says silently, "Heap coals of fire on my head. I'm made of asbestos." (*FD*, p. 242)

Like Mrs. Laurence's other heroines, Stacey is moved by the emotional appeal of hymns and scripture. The hymn, "Ye holy angels bright," and Matthew's quotation from Psalm 69 bring her to tears. The Bible is her natural frame of reference for everything from her boys fighting like Cain and Abel to her breasts "like apples as it says in the Song of Solomon" (*FD*, p. 8) to Matthew towering like Moses.

Stacey has also felt the restrictions of bondage. At first she felt trapped by her four walls. "Everything will be all right when the kids are older. I'll be more free." (*FD*, p. 4) Though her struggle for survival has taken place within the New Testament imagery of the fires of judgment, rather than the Old Testament story of Jacob and the Angel, Stacey has finally achieved a degree of freedom. She has endured the test by fire.

Every man's work shall be made manifest:
 for the day shall declare it, because it
 shall be revealed by fire; and the fire
 shall try every man's work of what sort
 it is. If any man's work abide which he

hath built thereupon, he shall receive a reward. If any man's work shall be burned, he shall suffer loss: but he himself shall be saved; yet so as by fire. 19

In a final reference to the Day of Judgment when "the sea gave up the dead which were in it"²⁰ Stacey's son, Duncan, is rescued from the sea. His resurrection to life, a parallel to his mother's renewal, consolidates the MacAindra family. As each member responds to this crisis (the Greek word for 'judgment') Stacey sees that communication is possible.

-- That's the most Mac will ever be able to say. They're not like me, either of them. They don't want to say it in full technicolor and intense detail. And that's okay, I guess. Ian gets the message. It's his language, too. I wish it were mine. All I can do is accept that it is a language, and that it works, at least sometimes.

(FD, pp. 295-296)

To mark the occasion Stacey invites Matthew to live with them and receives the reward of the righteous when Jen finally talks. "Hi, Mum. Want tea?" (FD, p. 299)

In *Long Drums and Cannons* (1968), her critical study of Nigerian dramatists and novelists, Margaret Laurence extols the writing of Chinua Achebe who "explores man's difficulties in communicating with others, and at the same time he emphasises the continuing necessity to keep on attempting to speak with the only means at our disposal -- words."²¹ Like Achebe she feels strongly that human beings ought

to be able to communicate and touch each other far more than they do, and this human loneliness and isolation, which obviously occurs everywhere, seems to me to be part of man's tragedy. I'm sure one of the main themes in all my writings in [sic] this sense of man's isolation from his fellows and how almost unbearably tragic this is. 22

For Margaret Laurence survival and communication are inseparable. Once Hagar, Rachel and Stacey can persist in their efforts to reach out to others, they are liberated from their self-imposed isolation. Regenerated and renewed they are raised to life again.

FOOTNOTES

¹Margaret Laurence, *The Fire-Dwellers* (1969; rpt. Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1973), p. 6. Hereafter abbreviated as *FD*.

²In conversation with Robert Kroetsch in *Creation* (Toronto: New Press, 1970), Mrs. Laurence reveals that she is not always aware of the symbolic implications in her work. She writes primarily from the observed literal world. "And yet there obviously are echoes in the mind when you are doing the writing. You sense the symbols. If they are organic symbols, if they grow there, if they belong there, you sense them. But it is something you don't analyse at the time. People point out certain things in your work and say: 'Well you know this particular bit of symbolism works extremely well,' and you say: 'Good Lord, I didn't know it was there!' But in a way, you half knew it was." (p. 58)

³I Peter 3:19.

⁴I Cor. 15:21-22.

⁵Margaret Laurence, "Ten Years' Sentences," *Canadian Literature*, 41 (Summer 1969), p. 15.

⁶Margaret Laurence, "Open Letter to the Mother of Joe Bass," *The New Romans*, ed. Al Purdy (Edmonton: M.G. Hurtig Ltd., 1968), pp. 35-36. Cf. *FD*, p. 96.

⁷Cf. "Open Letter to the Mother of Joe Bass," p. 35.

⁸Margaret Laurence, "Open Letter to the Mother of Joe Bass," p. 36. Cf. John 1:1.

⁹See Gen. 19:24.

¹⁰See Rev. 18:8.

¹¹See Psalm 122.

¹²The 'Number of the Beast,' 666 (Rev. 13:18), is said to correspond to 'Neron Caesar' in Greek notation.

¹³See Appendix A to chapter on *A Jest of God*.

¹⁴Cf. Matt. 4:1-11 or Luke 4:1-13.

¹⁵The fire which destroys the house and family of Piquette Tonnerre recurs in three of Mrs. Laurence's books: *A Bird in the House* (p. 126), *The Fire-Dwellers* (p. 264) and *The Diviners* (p. 158).

¹⁶I Cor. 7:9.

¹⁷Luke also reiterates the imagery of hell in this novel though his version is more classical than Biblical. He describes the Cedarvale ferry near Hazelton to Stacey: "Anyway, this beat-up old raft crawls across the Skeena and it's attached to some kind of a cable, and you think -- man, if that cable goes, that's it -- the river is wild as hell. But the old guy who runs it is calm as anything, probably been there forever. Charon. He talks very easy and slow, and you think -- maybe it wouldn't be such a bad death, after all." (pp. 226-227)

¹⁸Rom. 12:20. Cf. Prov. 25:22.

¹⁹I Cor. 3:13-15.

²⁰Rev. 20:13.

²¹Margaret Laurence, *Long Drums and Cannons* (London: Macmillan, 1968), p. 97.

²²Margaret Laurence, quoted by Donald Cameron in "Margaret Laurence: The Black Celt Speaks of Freedom," *Conversations with Canadian Novelists* (Toronto: Macmillan, 1973), Part I, p. 105.

Chapter Four

THE DIVINERS: A WRITER'S PILGRIMAGE

But whosoever drinketh of the water that I shall give him shall never thirst; but the water that I shall give him shall be in him a well of water springing up into everlasting life.

John 4:14

We have no power to do good works; without the grace of God.

The Thirty-Nine Articles
Article X

The Diviners (1974) may be not only Margaret Laurence's final novel but also her finest achievement. Though such an evaluation may be premature, there is no doubt that this work contains an elaboration and extension of the themes, characters and structures which provided the substance of the earlier Manawaka novels.

An overview of the Biblical influence in her Canadian works reveals a tendency to move away from the more obvious identification with archetypes in the earlier novels, *The Stone Angel* and *A Jest of God*, and proceed towards a more subtle use of images, echoes and structuring metaphors, as in *The Fire-Dwellers* and *A Bird in the House*. This progression continues in *The Diviners*, the culmination in her series of female jour-

neys to self-discovery. The journey of Morag Gunn is more complex than those of her predecessors because she is a writer in quest of the meaning behind the artist's creative gift.

Mrs. Laurence is frequently asked to explain the creative process. Once she answered,

"It's impossible to verbalize the process.... No writer really understands it, at the intellectual level. There's so much happens in the subconscious.... A writer is really trying to be a magician." 1

Morag Gunn also casts herself in this role.

I used to think words could do anything. Magic. Sorcery. Even miracle. But no, only occasionally. 2

Her search for the mystical power behind the words takes the form of a pilgrimage as the metaphor of the magician accretes a religious dimension in its transformation to diviner.

Though the Bible warns against false diviners,³ magic and religion have coexisted in many traditions. They operate in harmony in *The Diviners* as Morag meets several prophets, or diviners, on her pilgrimage and gains a new insight from each encounter. As part of Mrs. Laurence's conventional procedure, the journey begins with the establishment of the controlling metaphor. Hagar's story started in the Manawaka cemetery with the stone angel; Rachel was dying for the want of the golden city; Stacey's thoughts were preoccupied with the ladybird in the nursery rhyme whose house was on fire; Vanessa recalled

her incarceration in the Brick House. From the outset there is a change of tone in this novel as *The Diviners* begins with Morag's peaceful contemplation of the river which flows both ways like the direction of her life. Here there is a serenity which is particularly noticeable after the fire and destruction imagery of the previous Manawaka novel.

Water is a life-symbol at the beginning of the Bible as the Spirit of God moves upon the face of the waters in the story of Creation. The Old Testament associates water with purification, birth and healing while in the New Testament -- especially in the Fourth Gospel -- water symbolizes generation and renewal of life. The use of this symbol in *The Diviners* is inaugurated by the 'River of Now and Then,' a symbol of individual and collective memory which is the essence of Mrs. Laurence's concept of historical time. Like God's covenant with Abraham, time in her writing represents

everything acquired and passed on in a kind of memory-heritage from one generation to another. The time which is present in any story, therefore, must -- by implication at least -- include not only the totality of the characters' lives but also the inherited time of perhaps two or even three past generations, in terms of parents' and grandparents' recollections, and the much much longer past which has become legend, the past of a collective cultural memory. 4

Previous books by Mrs. Laurence establish water as a re-

current life-symbol ever since she saw the spring rains bring an end to the *Jilal* drought in Somaliland. Like the Israelites her Ghanaians crossed a metaphorical Jordan to freedom in her first novel. Rain water symbolized the tears of exile for Ruth Quansah and her mother in "The Rain Child" while the river in "The Tomorrow-Tamer" had a spiritual quality. For Vanessa MacLeod Diamond Lake was a refuge from the tyranny of the Brick House; one of her few happy childhood memories was the last summer she and her father saw the loons there.

The Manawaka novels continue the Biblical association of water as a transition from bondage to freedom. Hagar flees from the possibility of confinement in Silverthreads to the abandoned cannery near the ocean. Rachel and Nick leave their respective 'prisons' to meet on the bank of the Wachakwa River. Stacey, the ladybird who flies away *from* home, finds Luke on the shore of Howe Sound. In *The Diviners* Morag and Jules also commiserate by the Wachakwa. They are not so much prisoners as exiles; their personal alienation stems from the town's contempt for their families as well as the historical dispossession of the Scots and the Métis, conveyed to them by the Psalm-like stories and songs of their fathers.

One verse from the Psalms brought Stacey to tears in *The Fire-Dwellers*:

Save me, O God; for the waters are
come in unto my soul. 5

The Biblical symbolism of overwhelming waters of trouble reflects all too accurately her despair following Buckle's false accusation of infidelity. The same verse of scripture ~~resur-~~faces in this novel when Morag faces an uncertain future after her return to Canada from Scotland.

Water's dual potential for salvation or destruction in the Bible begins with the legend of the Flood and the history of the Exodus. Both events are developed in the New Testament as pre-figurations of Christian initiation in which the descent into the waters symbolizes a burial and the ascent, a resurrection. In this context Duncan's near drowning in *The Fire-Dwellers* could be said to accentuate the theme of *anastasis* in that novel. *The Stone Angel* too associates danger and death with the ocean.⁶ Royland, the 'Old Man of the River' in *The Diviners*, ~~is~~ is intimately connected with water's duality. When his wife committed suicide by drowning, his vocation changed from preaching hell-fire to divining well-water.

At the back of the house, Royland began walking slowly. Up and down the yard. Like the slow pace of a piper playing a pibroch. Only this was for a reverse purpose. Not the walk over the dead. The opposite.

(D, p. 102)

As Morag observes Royland divining, she

always felt she was about to learn something of great significance from him, something which would explain

everything. But things remained mysterious, his work, her own, the generations, the river.

(D, p. 4)

To unravel the mystery Morag journeys backwards in time like Hagar to her own beginnings in Manawaka and the "Nuisance Grounds."⁷ The origins of the Hebrew people are found in the story of Abraham and Sarah and though Mrs. Laurence has created a heroine with ancestral roots in Canadian history,⁸ she preserves a Biblical link by giving her the name Morag, the Gaelic form of Sarah.⁹ Like all of Mrs. Laurence's central characters she eventually escapes from the bondage of the small prairie town though her exodus becomes a pilgrimage as she sets out like John Bunyan's Christian who left the 'city of destruction' for the 'heavenly city.'

The pilgrimage theme in the Bible commemorates the movement of exodus and return from exile which finally ended with the arrival at Zion (or Sion), the hill in Jerusalem on which the Temple was built. "To go up to Jerusalem was in a certain way to celebrate the paschal liberation, to achieve the long journey."¹⁰ Christ also went regularly up to Jerusalem, but His pilgrimage transcended the earthly city to a new Jerusalem, the heavenly city of God.

The third section of *The Diviners*, titled "Halls of Sion," opens with Morag's recollection of the word 'Jerusalem.'

Jerusalem. Jerusalem? Why?
Gone. What had she meant by it?

(D, p. 169)

The answer is found in Prin Logan's favourite hymn, "Jerusalem the Golden," which extols the heavenly city as the Christian's eternal refuge.¹¹ Morag at first thought she had found the 'Halls of Sion' when she met and married Brooke Skelton, the complete antithesis of any man she knew in Manawaka. But this marriage is a false Jerusalem just as Brooke is not a true water/life symbol. Because he thwarts her desire to live through her writing or through progeny, his influence will not lead to salvation but destruction. Like Rachel Cameron she is in danger of being perpetually considered a child.

"Brooke, I am not your child.
I am your wife."

(D, p. 224)

Part of the initial attraction for Brooke had been Morag's denial of her past.

"When you first came to me," Brooke says, "you said you had no past. I liked that. It was as though everything was starting for you, right then, that moment."

(D, p. 257)

Though this was indeed her intention at the time, Morag gradually discovers that she will never be free until she reconciles herself with the past. The prophets of the Old Testament constantly re-

minded their countrymen to heed the lessons of their ancestors. Margaret Laurence too maintains that although inner freedom is one of the novel's main themes, "No one ever makes it in a perfect sense. We always have to carry along the baggage of the past."¹²

Until Morag can be liberated from her bondage through childbirth, her experience of the creative mystery is confined to writing. Her remarks upon completing the revisions to her first novel testify to the similarity in roles of writer and mother.

Only when the process is completed does she see that it has been like exercising muscles never before used, stiff and painful at first, and then later, filled with the knowledge that this part of herself really is there.

(D, p. 260)

As Stacey was redeemed by Luke, so Morag has a chance for salvation through an unexpected encounter with Jules Tonnerre, her *shaman* and muse. She confides to him the insight she received at Prin Logan's funeral.

"Ever hear that hymn, 'Jerusalem the Golden'?"

"I'm not much of a man for hymns."

"It was Prin's favourite. It was singing it at her funeral that -- well, I guess you sometimes see things suddenly, and then you know you've known them a long time."

(D, p. 271)

Jules, not Brooke, becomes her 'Prince' and redeemer by liberating her from her marriage, reconciling her with her Manawaka past through the mutual recollection of family legends and involving her directly in the creative process through the conception of Pique.

Those halls of Sion. The Prince is ever in them. What had Morag expected, those years ago, marrying Brooke? Those selfsame halls?

(D, p. 253)

Morag does not abandon her search for Jerusalem but continues her pilgrimage to the west coast. Margaret Laurence once used this metaphor to describe the lure of British Columbia for people from the prairies.

Think of it -- a land with no winter, semi-tropical beaches, breezes which were invariably balmy; a land where the apricots and apples virtually dropped into your mouth. Jerusalem the Golden, with milk and honey blest -- that was how we thought of it. 13

But Morag has again confused the external and the internal city as her thoughts reveal following her conversation with Julie Kazlik from Manawaka.

You Can't Go Home Again, said Thomas Wolfe. Morag wonders now if it may be the reverse which is true. You have to go home again, in some way or other.

(D, p. 302)

From Christie Logan's tales of her Gaelic ancestors, Morag

has always assumed that her roots are in Scotland and so her voyage home takes her to the British Isles. In London she meets a fellow artist, Daniel McRaith, who encourages her to continue to Scotland.

When, indeed, is she going to go?
The pilgrimage. Does that word dramatize it beyond what it is? Probably not.

(*D*, p. 369)

The creative gift is an important bond between Dan and Morag. After reading her books he divines part of the mystery of her talent.

"Yes. Strange -- that it could be you and not you, at the same time."
"That is just it." She does not want to talk much about this, but is warmed by the knowledge that he has seen it.

(*D*, p. 377)

But her pilgrimage comes to another false conclusion as Morag realizes that Scotland is not her ultimate goal.

"It's a deep land here, all right," Morag says. "But it's not mine, except a long long way back. I always thought it was the land of my ancestors, but it is not."

"What is, then?"

"Christie's real country. Where I was born."

(*D*, pp. 390-391)

Her journey is thus redirected to Manawaka, her real home, where she is able to atone for her earlier denial of the past

by visiting the dying Christie. In a reversal of the death-bed blessing that Jacob sought from Isaac, she acknowledges that Christie has been a true father to her.

"Well -- I'm blessed," Christie Logan says.

Another way of indicating surprise would have been to say -- *Well, I'm damned*. But that is not the phrase he has chosen. She sees from his eyes that the choice has been intentional.

(D, p. 396)

Like Vanessa she has had to wrestle with a formidable figure of authority from her past before obtaining the blessing of freedom. In realizing that Christie's myths are her reality Morag has placed the past in its proper perspective. Margaret Laurence also made this discovery when she recognized her grandfather's contribution to her ancestral heritage. The epigraph of this novel commemorates all pioneers:

'but they had their being once
and left a place to stand on'

Mrs. Laurence adds,

-- this is right, because this *is* the place that we are standing on. It took me many years to see that in point of fact what we were doing -- not just myself, but almost all Canadian writers -- was to try in some way to come to terms with our ancestral past, to deal with these themes of survival, of freedom and growth, and to record our mythology. 14

After Christie has died Morag recognizes that he was her first and perhaps greatest diviner.

Would there be a special corner of
 heaven, then, for scavengers and
 diviners? Which was Morag, if either,
 or were they the same thing?

(D, p. 212)

Like the ancient soothsayers Christie could "*tell the garbage --
 throw those decayed bones like dice or like sorcerer's symbols.*"

(D, p. 412) He divined the garbage on the Nuisance Grounds,
 disclosing the secrets of Manawaka and declaring in a blas-
 phemous parody of the Sermon on the Mount,

By their christly bloody garbage shall
 ye know them in their glory, is what
 I'm saying to you, every saintly mother's
 son. 15

(D, p. 75)

Morag like Christie becomes both ancestor and diviner as she
 bequeaths his inheritance of myths to her daughter, Pique, to
 which is added the legacy of Tonnerre songs from her father.
 Before Morag's pilgrimage ends, a new journey begins as Pique
 goes to Manawaka in search of her roots.

She is an inheritor of "Diviners,"
 both Morag and Jules; in her carrying
 on of the old songs -- and in her own,
 new song -- she has already begun to
 carry the responsibility of being a
 "Diviner" herself. 16

Finally settled in a house with "History. Ancestors"
 (D, p. 414) Morag ends her travels by the river which sym-
bolizes the flow of communication through the generations.
 It is here that she realizes that "Diviners, like pipers

and writers, possess faith and grace which flow from generation to generation."¹⁷ Though Royland's loss of divining power may be permanent, his gift can be transmitted to A-Okay Smith.

The inheritors. Was this, finally and at last, what Morag had always sensed she had to learn from the old man? She had known it all along, but not really known. The gift, or portion of grace, or whatever it was, was finally withdrawn to be given to someone else.

(D, p. 452)

Clara Thomas has called *The Diviners* "the story of a profoundly religious pilgrimage, the affirmation of faith and the finding of grace."¹⁸ Margaret Laurence's choice of this word to symbolize Morag's quest represents a major Biblical influence for grace, in its theological context, is the freely given, unmerited favour and love of God which, as she once noted, comes "when least expected or deserved."¹⁹ Because grace is "ultimately the self-communication of the absolute God to his creature,"²⁰ it is not surprising that it should figure so prominently in her writing.

When she received the honorary degree of Doctor of Letters from the University of Toronto, Margaret Laurence took the opportunity to reaffirm her long-standing concern for communication.

In just about twenty years, many of you will have grownup children. The forms of education, action and contemplation which they will need will be

different from your own. I think one of the best things I can wish for you, now and always, is that when that time comes, you will be able to listen to them and really *hear* at least part of what they are saying, and that you may be able to speak together, just as I pray that I and enough of my contemporaries may be able to do with you and those who follow you, so that the separate worlds we all inhabit may sometimes touch and know one another -- and in this knowledge necessarily change the outer world which we all share. 21

Grace has been present in various forms and guises in several of Mrs. Laurence's books. In her detachment from the family wranglings in *A Bird in the House*, Grandmother Connor appeared "to live in a state of perpetual grace," (BH, p. 72) like those who face life with a new outlook after receiving divine grace. "The final, almost grace"²² given to Hagar at the end of *The Stone Angel* allows her to perform two free acts before she dies. *A Jest of God* concludes with Rachel's prayer for "God's grace on fools," (JG, p. 202) a reference to the liberating power that released her from bondage. Amidst the eschatological images in *The Fire-Dwellers* Stacey contemplates her own mortality.

"If I could absorb the notion of nothing, of total dark, then it would have no power over me. But that grace isn't given."

(FD, p. 307)

For Margaret Laurence grace is synonymous with power and know-

ledge. It is thus the essential foundation to all her writing, especially in this novel which proclaims her artistic creed.

In her words,

Writing itself is more than an act of will; it is an act of hope and faith; it says life is worth living. 23

One of the last diviners encountered by Morag on her journey was Dan McRaith, whose name is a variant of the Gaelic MacRath, meaning 'Son of Grace.' As divine grace is -- according to St. Augustine -- the gift of the Spirit, Morag is encircled by a trinity of diviners in her life: McRaith, Royland, "old as Jehovah," (*D*, p. 25) and Christie, "both preacher and prophet,"²⁴ whose name has obvious Christian associations.

In the Old Testament the Spirit was bestowed on the prophets so that they could communicate divine truth. St. Paul speaks in the New Testament of wisdom and the working of miracles as gifts of the Spirit.²⁵ The water symbolism of *The Diviners* reinforces these spiritual implications as

the image of water in Holy Scripture [has] been refined so that it may be used to convey pre-eminently the thought of God's activity in the world through the Holy Spirit, who as a living fountain cleanses, quenches thirst and refreshes the People of God. 26

Spiritually refreshed and regenerated at the end of her pilgrimage, Morag reaches a pragmatic conclusion. Though her 'magic tricks' are similar to Royland's, they are really

of a different order. She would never know whether they actually worked or not, or to what extent. That wasn't given to her to know. In a sense, it did not matter. The necessary doing of the thing -- that mattered.

(D, p. 452)

With this discovery her journey has come full circle. At the outset her question about Royland's divining power was "*why* does it work?"

"I don't reckon I really need to understand it," Royland said. "I just gotta do it."

(D, p. 26)

The circular structure of the novel is confirmed by the 'River of Now and Then' where Morag's journey begins and ends. By returning to the optimistic tone of her African fiction, Mrs. Laurence also follows a cyclical form. The contrast in mood between *The Diviners* and her penultimate novel, *The Fire-Dwellers*, may be explained in part by Morag's reference to Prospero as having "the recognition that his real enemy is despair within, and that he stands in need of grace, like everyone else." (D, p. 330) With its proclamation of grace *The Diviners* transcends the despair of *The Fire-Dwellers* and reflects the strong sense of hope that Margaret Laurence now feels in her own life. The novel does not bring an end to Morag's story but rather implies a continuation to future generations through the creation of her fictional characters

and the procreation of Pique who contains the same promise of future hope as Nathaniel's son, Joshua, in *This Side Jordan*.

FOOTNOTES

¹Margaret Laurence, quoted by William French in "Margaret Laurence," *The Globe Magazine*, 25 April 1970, p. 9.

²Margaret Laurence, *The Diviners* (1974; rpt. Toronto: Bantam Books, 1975), p. 5. Hereafter abbreviated as *D*.

³See Jer. 29:8-9.

⁴Margaret Laurence, "Time and the Narrative Voice," *The Narrative Voice*, ed. John Metcalf (Toronto: McGraw-Hill Ryerson Ltd., 1972), p. 126.

⁵Psalm 69:1.

⁶See the article by Frank Pesando, "In a Nameless Land -- The Use of Apocalyptic Mythology in the Writings of Margaret Laurence," *Journal of Canadian Fiction*, 2:1 (Winter 1973): 53-58.

⁷Neepawa's town dump has been similarly described by Margaret Laurence. It was "known as *the nuisance grounds*, a phrase fraught with weird connotations, as though the effluvia of our lives was beneath contempt but at the same time was subtly threatening to the determined and sometimes hysterical propriety of our ways." ("Where the World Began," *Maclean's*, 85 (December 1972), p. 23.

⁸During the Highland Clearances of 1813 the Gunn family left Sutherland and emigrated to Canada. Disembarking at Fort Churchill on Hudson Bay they travelled southward by the waters of Lake Winnipeg to Lord Selkirk's settlement along the Red River. (See John Prebble, *The Highland Clearances* (London: Secker and Warburg, 1963), p. 76.)

⁹'Sarah' is the Hebrew word for 'princess' -- this additional echo may explain Mrs. Laurence's ironic choice of name for Christie's wife.

¹⁰Thierry Maertens, *Bible Themes* (Notre Dame: Fides Publishers, 1964), vol. II, p. 117.

¹¹See Appendix B to the chapter on *A Jest of God*.

¹²Margaret Laurence, quoted by Valerie Miner in "The matriarch of Manawaka," *Saturday Night*, 5 (May 1974), p. 19.

¹³Margaret Laurence, "Down East," *Vancouver Sun*, 20 March 1971, p. 6.

¹⁴Margaret Laurence, quoted by Clara Thomas in "A Conversation about Literature: An Interview with Margaret Laurence and Irving Layton," *Journal of Canadian Fiction*, 1 (Winter 1972), p. 67.

¹⁵Cf. Matt. 5-7.

¹⁶Clara Thomas, *The Manawaka World of Margaret Laurence* (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1975), p. 167.

¹⁷Joan Hind-Smith, *Three Voices* (Toronto: Clarke, Irwin and Co., 1975), p. 59.

¹⁸Clara Thomas, *The Manawaka World of Margaret Laurence*, p. 131.

¹⁹Margaret Laurence, "Don't Whisper Sudden; I Scare Easy," *Vancouver Sun*, 20 December 1969, p. 6.

²⁰*Encyclopedia of Theology*, ed. Karl Rahner (New York: Seabury Press, 1975), p. 596.

²¹Margaret Laurence, "A plea to hear what newer generations are telling us," *University of Toronto News*, February 1973, p. 6.

²²Margaret Laurence, quoted by Clara Thomas in "A Conversation about Literature: An Interview with Margaret Laurence and Irving Layton," p. 68.

²³Margaret Laurence, quoted by Joan Hind-Smith in *Three Voices*, p. 52.

²⁴Clara Thomas, *The Manawaka World of Margaret Laurence*, p. 140.

²⁵See I Cor. 12.

²⁶*A Theological Word Book of the Bible*, ed. Alan Richardson (London: S.C.M. Press, 1957), p. 281.

Epilogue

For here we have no continuing
city, but we seek one to come.

Hebrews 13:14

The struggle to achieve freedom is the hallmark of Margaret Laurence's writing. Inspired by the story of Jacob and the Angel, she successively engages her characters in symbolic contests from which they emerge with the awareness that they have been close to the mystery of existence. Even though Jacob's encounter produced only a partial revelation of divinity, the experience gave his life renewal and purpose. The characters of Mrs. Laurence may indeed have the ability to survive, but can attain only a limited freedom in this life. ✓

It may seem at first paradoxical that Mrs. Laurence has chosen so traditional a source to structure her theme of freedom. There is always a danger that the myth can impose a pattern within which the lives of the characters tend to be worked out rather than working themselves out. Fortunately, Mrs. Laurence is too skilful a writer to follow any formula slavishly. She makes no attempt, for instance, to incorporate the totality of the Bible's dramatic structure in her work but rather makes random borrowings of Biblical material when parallels seem appropriate.] ✓

when parallels seem appropriate.

An approximation of consecutive Biblical development is evident, however, in her choice of freedom archetypes. In the beginning her religious center is largely Hebraic with emphasis on the stories of Hagar, Rachel, Jacob and Joshua. For these people in the Old Testament the promise of God's freedom was represented by the Promised Land. In *The Stone Angel*, which remains the most cogent example of her reliance on the Bible, the transition to a Christian center of emphasis takes place with St. Paul's use of Hagar as a symbol of bondage. His interpretation of freedom implies that those like Hagar will be fated to live in the wilderness not solely because of pride but because they are bound to a literal observance of the Law rather than taking the opportunity to enjoy Christ's law of love. A new symbol of freedom is expressed in the concept of the heavenly city of Jerusalem which appears in Margaret Laurence's later works. *The Diviners* uses this goal for Morag's pilgrimage of self-discovery, a New Testament exodus.

The triptych of freedom is completed by grace, symbol of perfect freedom in conventional theological terms. It is this symbol which gives a spiritual quality to Margaret Laurence's work as she makes use of its manifold implications of love, favour, communication and knowledge. God's grace is the quintessential link between divinity and humanity, forged by the power of the Holy Spirit.

Margaret Laurence, like Delacroix and her fictional

characters, has also wrestled with the mystery of existence. The apprehension about the future of humanity that she conveyed through the imagery of judgment and destruction in *The Fire-Dwellers* appears to have diminished in *The Diviners*. For the first time she talks of expressing her own faith through her writing as Morag comes closer than any previous heroines to what might be termed the god within. Mrs. Laurence has always been aware of human frailties but now realizes that the potential for survival depends on the power of God's grace.

Part of this faith was something I was trying to express in THE DIVINERS, which at the deepest level seems to me to be about God's grace -- something which, in one way or another, has been experienced by people in all cultures and religions, however they define it. *

This knowledge which she celebrates in her latest novel is the blessing of her own spiritual wrestling. By witnessing the dimension of historical truth that the Bible has added to her writing, she is able to accept the fact that her creative gift may indeed be a manifestation of divine grace.

*Margaret Laurence, Letter to M. Lancaster, 11 April 1976.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

I. WORKS BY MARGARET LAURENCE

A. Books

- Laurence, Margaret. *A Bird in the House*. 1970; rpt. Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1974. New Canadian Library No. 96. BH
- _____. *The Diviners*. 1974; rpt. Toronto: Bantam Books, 1975. D
- _____. *The Fire-Dwellers*. 1969; rpt. Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1973. New Canadian Library No. 87. FD
- _____. *Jason's Quest*. Ill. Steffan Torell. Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1970. JQ
- _____. *A Jest of God*. 1966; rpt. Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1974. New Canadian Library No. 111. JG
- _____. *Long Drums and Cannons*. London: Macmillan, 1968. LDC
- _____. *The Prophet's Camel Bell*. London: Macmillan, 1963. PCB
- _____. *The Stone Angel*. 1964; rpt. Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1968. New Canadian Library No. 59. SA ✓
- _____. *This Side Jordan*. London: Macmillan, 1960. TSJ
- _____. *The Tomorrow-Tamer and Other Stories*. 1963; rpt. Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1970. New Canadian Library No. 70. TT
- _____. *A Tree for Poverty*. 1954; rpt. Hamilton: McMaster University, 1970. TFP

B. Articles

Laurence, Margaret. "Open Letter to the Mother of Joe Bass." *The New Romans*. Ed. Al Purdy. Edmonton: M.G. Hurtig Ltd., 1968, pp. 34-37.

_____. "Sources." *Mosaic*, 3 (Spring 1970): 80-84.

_____. "Ten Years' Sentences." *Canadian Literature*, 41 (Summer 1969): 10-16.

_____. "Time and the Narrative Voice." *The Narrative Voice*. Ed. John Metcalf. Toronto: McGraw-Hill Ryerson Ltd., 1972, pp. 126-130.

_____. "Where the World Began." *Maclean's*, 85 (December 1972): 22-23, 80.

C. Miscellaneous

1) uncollected short stories:

Laurence, Margaret. "Mask of Beaten Gold." *Tamarack Review*, 29 (Autumn 1963): 3-21.

_____. "A Queen in Thebes." *Tamarack Review*, 32 (Summer 1964): 25-37.

2) sonnet:

Laurence, Margaret. "Song for Spring." *Canadian Author and Bookman*, 42 (Winter 1966): 7.

3) newspaper columns:

Note: In 1969 Margaret Laurence was commissioned to write "occasional articles" for the "Page Six" feature of the *Vancouver Sun*. There is a possibility that they may be published in a collection.*

* McClelland and Stewart plan to publish *Heart of a Stranger* in the fall of 1976.

Laurence, Margaret. "Don't Whisper Sudden;
I Scare Easy." *Vancouver Sun*, 20 Decem-
ber 1969, p. 6.

_____. "Down East." *Vancouver Sun*,
20 March 1971, p. 6.

_____. "Hello Aunt Nelly: I'm on the
Telly." *Vancouver Sun*, 17 June 1972,
p. 6.

_____. "I Am a Taxi." *Vancouver Sun*,
16 May 1970, p. 6.

_____. "Love and Madness in the Steel
Forest." *Vancouver Sun*, 18 October 1969,
p. 6.

_____. "Voices from Future Places."
Vancouver Sun, 22 April 1972, p. 6.

_____. "The Wild Blue Yonder." *Vancouver
Sun*, 1 September 1973, p. 6.

4) convocation address:

Laurence, Margaret. "A plea to *hear* what newer
generations are telling us." *University of
Toronto News*, February 1973, p. 6.

5) correspondence:

Laurence, Margaret. Letter to Miriam Lancaster,
11 April 1976.

II. WORKS ABOUT MARGARET LAURENCE

A. Books

Hind-Smith, Joan. *Three Voices*. Toronto:
Clarke, Irwin and Co., 1975.

Thomas, Clara. *The Manawaka World of Margaret Laurence*. Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1975.

———. *Margaret Laurence*. Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1969. New Canadian Library: Canadian Writers No. 3.

B. Interviews

- Asante, Nadine. "Margaret (Rachel, Rachel) Laurence." *Montrealer*, 44:6 (June 1969): 30-33.
- Atwood, Margaret. "Face to Face." *Maclean's*, 87 (May 1974): 38-39, 43-44, 46.
- + Cameron, Donald. "Margaret Laurence: The Black Celt Speaks of Freedom." *Conversations with Canadian Novelists*. Toronto: Macmillan, 1973, Part I, pp. 96-115.
- French, William. "Margaret Laurence." *The Globe Magazine*, 25 April 1970, pp. 4-6, 9.
- + Gibson, Graeme. "Margaret Laurence." *Eleven Canadian Novelists*. Toronto: Anansi, 1973, pp. 151-179.
- + Kroetsch, Robert. "A Conversation with Margaret Laurence." *Creation*. Toronto: New Press, 1970, pp. 53-63.
- Miner, Valerie. "The matriarch of Manawaka." *Saturday Night*, 5 (May 1974): 17-20.
- + Thomas, Clara. "A Conversation about Literature: An Interview with Margaret Laurence and Irving Layton." *Journal of Canadian Fiction*, 1 (Winter 1972): 65-69.
- Wigmore, Donnal. "Margaret Laurence: The Woman Behind the Writing." *Chatelaine*, 44 (February 1971): 28-29, 52, 54.

Toppings, Earle interview. "Interview with Margaret Laurence.
The Ontario Institute for Studies in Education
1971

C. Introductions

- Bevan, Allan. Introduction to NCL edition of *The Fire-Dwellers*. Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1973, pp. viii-xiv.
- Gibbs, Robert. Introduction to NCL edition of *A Bird in the House*. Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1974, pp. ix-xiv.
- Killam, G.D. Introduction to NCL edition of *A Jest of God*. Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1974, pp. v-ix.
- Laurence, Margaret. 'Author's Commentary' on "The Tomorrow-Tamer" and "A Bird in the House" in *Sixteen by Twelve*. Ed. John Metcalf. Toronto: Ryerson Press, 1970, pp. 71-73.
- New, William H. Introduction to NCL edition of *The Stone Angel*. Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1968, pp. iii-x. ✓
- Thomas, Clara. Introduction to NCL edition of *The Tomorrow-Tamer and Other Stories*. Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1970, pp. xi-xvii.

D. Critical Studies

- Anon. "Laurence of Manitoba." *Canadian Author and Bookman*, 42 (Winter 1966): 4-7.
- Ayre, John. "Bell, Book and Scandal." *Weekend Magazine*, 28 August 1976, pp. 9-12.
- Bowering, George. "That Fool of A Fear: Notes on *A Jest of God*." *Canadian Literature*, 50 (Autumn 1971): 41-56.
- Callaghan, Barry. "The Writing of Margaret Laurence." *Tamarack Review*, 36 (Summer 1965): 45-51.
- Cameron, Donald. "Of Tyranny and Growth." *Journal of Commonwealth Literature*, 5 (July 1968): 133-135.

Djwa, Sandra A. "Biblical Archetype in Western Canadian Fiction." *Western Canada Past and Present*, Ed. A.W. Rasporich. Calgary: McClelland and Stewart West, 1975, pp. 193-203.

———. "False Gods and the True Covenant: Thematic Continuity between Margaret Laurence and Sinclair Ross." *Journal of Canadian Fiction*, 1:4 (Fall 1972): 43-50.

Forman, Denyse and Una Parameswaran. "Echoes and Refrains in the Canadian Novels of Margaret Laurence." *Centennial Review*, 16 (1972): 233-253.

†Gom, Leona M. "Margaret Laurence and The First Person." *Dalhousie Review*, 55:2 (Summer 1975): 236-251. ✓

Gotlieb, Phyllis. "On Margaret Laurence." *Tamarack Review*, 52 (Fall 1969): 76-80.

Harlow, Robert. "Lack of Distance." *Canadian Literature*, 31 (Winter 1967): 71-75.

-Hughes, Kenneth James. "Divining the past, present, future." *Canadian Dimension*, 10:7 (March 1975): 41-45.

Kattan, Naïm. "L'enfance et l'adolescence manitobaines de Margaret Laurence." *Liberté*, 12 (juillet-août 1970): 85-87.

-Kertzer, J.M. "The Stone Angel: Time and Responsibility." *Dalhousie Review*, 54 (Autumn 1974): 499-509.

Kreisel, Henry. "The African Stories of Margaret Laurence." *Canadian Forum*, 41 (April 1961): 8-10.

———. "Familiar Landscape." *Tamarack Review*, 55 (1970): 91-92, 94.

McLay, C.M. "Every Man Is an Island: Isolation in *A Jest of God*." *Canadian Literature*, 50 (Autumn 1971): 57-68.

- Pesando, Frank. "In the Nameless Land -- The Use of Apocalyptic Mythology in the Writings of Margaret Laurence." *Journal of Canadian Fiction*, 2 (Winter 1973): 53-58.
- Read, S.E. "Margaret Laurence, *The Stone Angel*." *B.C. Library Quarterly*, 28 (July-October 1964): 41-44. ✓
- _____. "The Maze of Life, The Work of Margaret Laurence." *Canadian Literature*, 27 (Winter 1966): 5-14. ✓
- Robertson, George. "An Artist's Progress." *Canadian Literature*, 21 (Summer 1964): 53-55.
- Stevenson, Warren. "The Myth of Demeter and Persephone in *A Jest of God*." *Studies in Canadian Literature*, (Winter 1976): 120-123.
- Thomas, Clara. "The Novels of Margaret Laurence." *Studies in the Novel*, 4:2 (Summer 1972): 154-164. ✓
- _____. "Proud Lineage: Willa Cather and Margaret Laurence." *Canadian Review of American Studies*, 2 (Spring 1971): 1-12.
- Thompson, Anne. "The Wilderness of Pride: Form and Image in *The Stone Angel*." *Journal of Canadian Fiction*, 4:3 (1975): 95-110. ✓
- Woodcock, George. "Jungle and Prairie." *Canadian Literature*, 45 (Summer 1970): 82-84.

E. Book Reviews

1) *A Bird in the House*

- Dobbs, Kildare. "A certain relish for tears." *Saturday Night*, 85 (August 1970): 26-27.
- J.P. untitled. *Malahat Review*, 15 (July 1970): 113-115.

Kirkwood, Hilda. untitled. *Canadian Forum*,
50 (September 1970): 221-222.

2) *The Diviners*

Anon. untitled. *New Yorker*, 50 (8 July 1974): 79.

x Bevan, Allan. untitled. *Dalhousie Review*, 54
(Summer 1974): 360-363.

Cameron, A. Barry. untitled. *Queen's Quarterly*,
81:4 (Winter 1974): 639-640.

Engel, Marian. "Margaret Laurence: her new book
divines women's truths." *Chatelaine*, 47 (May
1974): 25.

Frank, Sheldon. untitled. *New Republic*, (27 July-
3 August 1974): 28-29.

Gotlieb, Phyllis. untitled. *Tamarack Review*,
63 (October 1974): 80-81.

Lever, Bernice. untitled. *Canadian Author and
Bookman*, 50:1 (Fall 1974): 26.

Mickleburgh, Brita. untitled. *Fiddlehead*, 104
(Winter 1975): 111-114.

Rudzik, O.H.T. untitled. *University of Toronto
Quarterly*, 44 (Summer 1975): 304.

Thomas, Audrey. "A Broken Wand?" *Canadian
Literature*, 62 (Autumn 1974): 89-91.

Weeks, Edward. untitled. *Atlantic Monthly*,
233 (June 1974): 108-109.

3) *The Fire-Dwellers*

Bennet, M.K. untitled. *Executive*, 11 (August
1969): 56.

Campau, Dubarry. untitled. *Atlantic Advocate*, 59 (May 1969): 56-57.

Engel, Marian. "The girl who escaped from Manawaka is at the core of Margaret Laurence's new novel." *Saturday Night*, 84 (May 1969): 38-39.

X Grosskurth, Phyllis. "Wise and Gentle." *Canadian Literature*, 43 (Winter 1970): 91-92.

J.W. "Woman Alive." *Chatelaine*, 42 (June 1969): 8.

Roper, Gordon. untitled. *University of Toronto Quarterly*, 39 (July 1970): 344-345.

Spettigue, D.O. untitled. *Queen's Quarterly*, 76 (Winter 1969): 722-724.

Sykes, Philip. untitled. *Maclean's*, 82 (June 1969): 98.

Thompson, Kent. untitled. *Fiddlehead*, 82 (November-December 1969): 72-73.

Watt, F.W. untitled. *Canadian Forum*, 49 (July 1969): 87.

4) *Jason's Quest*

Thomas, Clara. "Bashing On." *Canadian Literature*, 50 (Autumn 1971): 88-90.

5) *A Jest of God*

Bannerman, James. "The Passion of a Prairie Spinster." *Maclean's*, 79 (1 October 1966): 54.

Braddock, John. "The Supreme Communicator." *Atlantic Advocate*, 59 (May 1967): 78.

Duffy, Dennis. "Critical Sympathies." *Tamarack Review*, 42 (Winter 1967): 78-83.

Read, S.E. untitled. *B.C. Library Quarterly*, 30 (October 1966): 23-25.

Stedmond, J.M. untitled. *University of Toronto Quarterly*, 36 (July 1967): 382.

6) *Long Drums and Cannons*

Boxill, Anthony. untitled. *Fiddlehead*, 80 (May-June-July 1969): 105-106.

Carroll, David. untitled. *University of Toronto Quarterly*, 40 (Summer 1971): 359-360.

'Piquefort's Column.' "Long Drums and Cannons and Ilyushins." *Canadian Forum*, 48 (February 1969): 249.

Thomas, Clara. "Ascent and Agony." *Canadian Literature*, 42 (Autumn 1969): 91-93.

7) *The Prophet's Camel Bell*

Edinborough, Arnold. "Giving and Getting." *Saturday Night*, 79 (January 1964): 25-26.

Girling, H.K. untitled. *Queen's Quarterly*, 71 (Autumn 1964): 456-457.

Robson, John M. untitled. *University of Toronto Quarterly*, 33 (July 1964): 431-432.

8) *The Stone Angel*

Godfrey, Dave. "For Bonfires/For Burning." *Tamarack Review*, 33 (Autumn 1964): 92-98.

Graham, Angela. "Hagar Shipley." *Alphabet*,
10 (July 1965): 85-86.

Watt, F.W. untitled. *University of Toronto
Quarterly*, 34 (July 1965): 373-375.

9) *This Side Jordan*

Babalow, Anthony. untitled. *B.C. Library
Quarterly*, 25 (July 1961): 31, 34.

Dobbs, Kildare. "Outside Africa." *Canadian
Literature*, 8 (Spring 1961): 62-63.

Evans, J.A.S. "Tragedy in Africa." *Canadian
Commentator*, 5 (February 1961): 13-14.

Watt, F.W. untitled. *University of Toronto
Quarterly*, 30 (July 1961): 406-407.

10) *The Tomorrow-Tamer and Other Stories*

Godfrey, Dave. "Figments of the Northern Mind."
Tamarack Review, 31 (Spring 1964): 87-93.

H.R.P. "A Mirror to Emerging Africa." *Canadian
Author and Bookman*, 39 (Spring 1964): 10.

11) *A Tree for Poverty*

Wiseman, Adele. "Somali Literature." *Queen's
Quarterly*, 62 (Winter 1956): 610-611.

III. THE HOLY BIBLE

A. Primary

The Holy Bible. King James Version.

The New English Bible. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1970.

Wt

B. Secondary

Auerbach, Erich. *Mimesis: The Representation of Reality in Western Literature.* Trans. Willard R. Trask. 1953; rpt. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1968.

Bicknell, E.J. *A Theological Introduction to the Thirty-Nine Articles of the Church of England.* 3rd ed. Rev. H.J. Carpenter. London: Longmans, 1955.

Campbell, D.B.J. *The Old Testament for Modern Readers.* London: John Murray, 1972.

Carey, Walter J. *The Life in Grace.* London: Longmans, Green and Co., 1914.

Cowan, Henry. *John Knox: The Hero of the Scottish Reformation.* 1905; rpt. New York: AMS Press, 1970.

Daujat, Jean. *The Theology of Grace.* Trans. by a nun of Stanbrook Abbey. New York: Hawthorn Books, 1959.

de Vaux, Roland. *Ancient Israel: Its Life and Institutions.* Trans. John McHugh. 1961; rpt. London: Darton, Longman and Todd, 1973.

A Dictionary of Christian Theology. Ed. Alan Richardson. London: S.C.M. Press, 1969.

- Dillistone, F.W. *Traditional Symbols and the Contemporary World*. London: Epworth Press, 1973.
- Dinsmore, Charles Allen. *The English Bible as Literature*. New York: Houghton Mifflin Co., 1931.
- Encyclopedia of Theology: The Concise Sacramentum Mundi*. Ed. Karl Rahner. New York: Seabury Press, 1975.
- Frazer, Sir James George. *The Golden Bough*. London: Macmillan and Co., 1929.
- Frost, Stanley Brice. *Patriarchs and Prophets*. Montreal: McGill University Press, 1963.
- Guillaume, Alfred. *Prophecy and Divination*. London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1938.
- Guillet, Jacques. *Themes of the Bible*. Trans. Albert J. LaMothe, Jr. 1961; rpt. Notre Dame: Fides Publishers, 1965.
- Guthrie, Harvey H., Jr. *God and History in the Old Testament*. Greenwich: Seabury Press, 1960.
- Henn, T.R. *The Bible as Literature*. London: Lutterworth, 1970.
- The Interpreter's Bible*. Ed. George Arthur Buttrick. 12 vol. New York: Abingdon Press, 1952.
- James, Fleming. *Personalities of the Old Testament*. New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1930.
- Maertens, Thierry. *Bible Themes: A Source Book*. 2 vol. Notre Dame: Fides Publishers, 1964.
- Morton, H.V. *Women of the Bible*. London: Methuen and Co., 1940.
- Neil, William. *The Plain Man Looks at the Bible*. London: Fontana Books, 1956.

Oman, John. *Grace and Personality*. 1917; rpt.
London: Fontana Library, 1960.

The Oxford Dictionary of the Christian Church.
Ed. F.L. Cross. 2nd ed. Rev. F.L. Cross
and E.A. Livingstone. London: Oxford
University Press, 1974.

Peake's Commentary on the Bible. Ed. Matthew
Black. London: Thomas Nelson and Sons, 1962.

A Theological Word Book of the Bible. Ed. Alan
Richardson. London: S.C.M. Press, 1957.

Understanding the Old Testament. Ed. O. Jessie
Lace. Cambridge: University Press, 1972.

Van Seters, John. *Abraham in History and Tra-
dition*. New Haven: Yale University Press,
1975.

Young, Robert. *Analytical Concordance to the
Bible*. 22nd ed. Grand Rapids: Wm. B.
Eerdmans, n.d.

IV. OTHER WORKS CONSULTED

Atwood, Margaret. *Survival*. Toronto: Anansi,
1972.

Clark, Kenneth. *Civilisation; a personal view*.
London: British Broadcasting Corporation,
1969.


Encyclopaedia Britannica. Vol. 10. Chicago:
William Benton, 1970.

Frye, Northrop. *Anatomy of Criticism: Four
Essays*. Princeton: Princeton University
Press, 1957.

———. *The Bush Garden: Essays on the
Canadian Imagination*. Toronto: Anansi,
1971.

- Jones, D.G. *Butterfly on Rock*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1970.
- Mannoni, O. *Prospero and Caliban: The Psychology of Colonization*. Trans. from 2nd ed. by Pamela Powesland. 1956; rpt. New York: Frederick A. Praeger, 1964.
- Morton, Desmond. *The Last War Drum: The North-West Campaign of 1885*. Toronto: Hakkert, 1972.
- Moss, John. *Patterns of Isolation*. Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1974.
- Murgia, Adelaide. *The Life and Times of Delacroix*. Trans. Peter Muccini. London: Paul Hamlyn, 1968.
- Prebble, John. *The Highland Clearances*. London: Secker and Warburg, 1963.
- Shakespeare, William. *The Tempest*. Ed. P.D.L. Way. (The Alexander Shakespeare) London: Collins, 1974.
- Supplement to the Oxford Companion to Canadian History and Literature*. Ed. W. Toye. Toronto: Oxford University Press, 1973. ✓

CHRONOLOGY : MARGARET LAURENCE

- 1926 July 18 -- Jean Margaret Wemyss born to Robert Wemyss, lawyer, and Verna Simpson Wemyss, music teacher, in Neepawa, Manitoba.
- 1930 Death of Margaret's mother.
- 1931 Robert Wemyss marries his sister-in-law, Margaret Simpson, librarian.
- 1936 The Wemysses adopt a son, Robert.
Death of Margaret's father.
Mrs. Wemyss and her two children move to the home of her parents. 
- 1943 Margaret graduates from Neepawa Collegiate Institute and is awarded the Governor-General's Medal and a Manitoba Scholarship to attend United College in Winnipeg. *prep school*
- 1947 She graduates from United College with a B.A.
Marries John F. (Jack) Laurence.
Works as a journalist for the *Winnipeg Citizen*.
- 1949 The Laurences go to London, England.
- 1950 They move to the Somaliland Protectorate where Jack Laurence is employed as a civil engineer for the British Colonial Service.
- 1952 Birth of a daughter, Jocelyn, in England.
The Laurences move to the Gold Coast.
- 1954 *A Tree for Poverty*, Mrs. Laurence's first published book and the first collection in English of Somali poetry and stories.
- 1955 Birth of a son, David, in Accra.
- 1957 The Gold Coast becomes independent Ghana.
The Laurences return to Canada and move to Vancouver, B.C.
- 1960 *This Side Jordan*, Mrs. Laurence's first novel.

- 1962 The Laurences separate and Mrs. Laurence moves to London, England with her children.
- 1963 *The Tomorrow-Tamer and Other Stories*, a collection of short stories.
The Prophet's Camel Bell, the journal of her experiences in Somaliland.
- 1964 Simultaneous American publication by Alfred Knopf of *The Stone Angel* (a novel), *New Wind in a Dry Land* (U.S. title of *The Prophet's Camel Bell*) and *The Tomorrow-Tamer and Other Stories*.
- 1965 Mrs. Laurence is invited to attend the independence celebrations of the Somali Republic.
- 1966 *A Jest of God*, a novel. Winner of the Governor-General's Literary Award.
- 1968 *Long Drums and Cannons*, a critical study of Nigerian writers.
Rachel, Rachel -- film version of *A Jest of God*, starring Joanne Woodward, produced and directed by Paul Newman (Warners-Seven Arts).
- 1969 *The Fire-Dwellers*, a novel.
The Laurences are divorced.
Mrs. Laurence is the writer-in-residence at the University of Toronto.
- 1970 *Jason's Quest*, a children's book.
A Bird in the House, a collection of short stories.
Mrs. Laurence buys a cottage ('Manawaka') on the Otonabee River near Peterborough.
- 1972 She is made a Companion of the Order of Canada.
- 1973 She decides to leave the Elm Cottage in Penn, Buckinghamshire and live permanently in Canada.
- 1974 *The Diviners*, a novel. Winner of the Governor-General's Literary Award. Mrs. Laurence has also been the recipient of Canada Council Awards and the \$15,000 Molson Prize. She buys a yellow brick house in Lakefield, Ontario and is the writer-in-residence at the University of Western Ontario, London and at Trent University, Peterborough.
- 1976 *Heart of a Stranger*, a collection of essays.

VITA

Surname: LANCASTER Given Names: MIRIAM ANN

Place of Birth: REGINA, SASK. Date of Birth: 28 April 1942

Educational Institutions Attended, with Dates of Entering and Leaving:

UNIVERSITY OF BRITISH COLUMBIA, VANCOUVER 1959 to 1963

UNIVERSITY OF VICTORIA (part-time) 1971 to 1976 ✓

Degrees, Diplomas, Etc. Awarded, with Dates and Names of Institutions:

B.A. (Honours) 1963 University of B.C., Vancouver

A.R.C.T. 1966 Royal Conservatory of Music

_____ of Toronto _____

Honors and Awards:

Publications:

PARTIAL COPYRIGHT LICENSE

I hereby grant the right to lend my thesis (the title of which is shown below) to users of the University of Victoria Library, and to make *single copies only* for such users or in response to a request from the library of any other university, or similar institution, on its behalf or for one of its users. I further agree that permission for extensive copying of this thesis for scholarly purposes may be granted by me or a member of the University designated by me. It is understood that copying or publication of this thesis for financial gain shall not be allowed without my written permission.

Title of Thesis

JACOB AND THE ANGEL : A STUDY OF BIBLICAL

INFLUENCES IN THE WORK OF MARGARET LAURENCE

Author


Miriam Lancaster

August 1976
