

HAGAR IN HELL

Margaret Laurence's Fallen Angel

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MARGARET LAURENCE has afforded readers of *The Stone Angel* significant insight into Hagar Shipley's character through various allusions to literary archetypes embedded in the narrative. The biblical story of Hagar has garnered the bulk of critical attention for obvious reasons, although Shakespeare's *King Lear*, Coleridge's *Ancient Mariner*, Keats' *Meg Merrilies*, and Joyce Cary's *Sara Monday* have also received prominent consideration.¹ Nevertheless, whereas each of these analogues illuminates one or more key aspects of Hagar's predicament, none can be said in itself to embrace the whole. For this, I believe, we must turn to Milton's *Paradise Lost*, one of the most influential books in Laurence's background. Clara Thomas records that Laurence kept and treasured her mother's calfbound copy of the poem, which she reread "repeatedly, before and during the composition of every novel," and that among the author's papers at York University is "a sheaf of pages folded over and labelled 'Morag's Notes on *Paradise Lost*.' These are notes in Morag's voice, not Margaret's, on each book of *Paradise Lost*" ("Towards Freedom" 87). Not only does Morag study Milton's epic while boarding at the Crawleys', but she also marries a Milton scholar and titles one of her novels *Shadow of Eden*, all of which indicates how thoroughly the great work had been assimilated into Laurence's creative imagination. It is not surprising, therefore, that she should have turned to Milton's Satan as the prototype for her own proud, rebellious angel.² Indeed, within the context of the Manawaka Cycle, *The Stone Angel* represents Margaret Laurence's vision of Hell, with Hagar Shipley manifesting the characteristics of the most notorious fallen angel.

Paradise Lost begins immediately after the war in Heaven, with Satan and his host of rebel angels surveying the fiery wasteland into which they have been hurled: "A dungeon horrible, on all sides round / As one great furnace flamed, yet from those flames / No light, but rather darkness visible" (1. 61-63). Pride, Satan realizes, has caused his downfall, but he emerges unrepentant, believing that "to be weak is miserable / Doing or suffering" (1. 157-58). He rationalizes that "The mind is its own place, and in itself / Can make a heav'n of hell, a hell of heav'n" (1. 254-55); and he further concludes that it is "Better to reign in hell, than serve in heav'n" (1. 263). It is not clear how far Satan knowingly deludes himself here, since he has not yet lost all his original lustre and presumably has not therefore

succumbed entirely to his own evil. However, no amount of self-deception can alter the fact that his Hell is both a physical place and a mental state of torment, the latter assuming the greater relevance to him as the story unfolds. For even as he traverses the void to escape Pandemonium and discover Eden, “within him hell / He brings, and round about him, nor from hell / One step no more than from himself can fly” (iv. 20-22). Some portion of this Hell within consists in the knowledge that he is self-damned according to the doctrine of free will, and some part is composed of the grim reality, soon verified, that evil has power only to recoil back upon itself.

That Hagar’s plight parallels Satan’s is implied in her preliminary recollection of the stone angel her father had purchased “in pride” to mark her mother’s grave, a “doubly blind” monument that symbolizes Hagar herself, who is blinded equally by overweening pride and slavish conformity to proper appearances. While not the only angel in the Manawaka cemetery, this one holds dominion over the rest by virtue of being “the first, the largest, and certainly the costliest” (2); Hagar is likewise first in her own mind, large in physical bulk, and has led a costly life in emotional and spiritual terms. The other angels are “a lesser breed entirely” by comparison, “petty angels, cherubim with pouting stone mouths,” forever cast in diverse graceless poses: “one holding aloft a stone heart, another strumming in eternal silence upon a small stringless harp, and yet another pointing with ecstatic leer to an inscription” (2) bidding peaceful repose to one Regina Weese. The disparity among the angels in the graveyard mirrors that between Satan, who even after battle stands “above the rest / In shape and gesture proudly eminent” (i. 589-90), and his fallen brethren, whose unquestioning servitude and gullibility bespeak their inferiority. And just as the rebel angels’ names are forthwith stricken from the Book of Life, so Hagar accounts herself “doubtless forgotten” in Manawaka. But she has not forgotten, either the proud glory of a childhood spent basking in her father’s indulgence or her fall from grace precipitated by her defiant marriage to Bram Shipley.

THE CONCEPT OF THE FALL is as central to *The Stone Angel* as to *Paradise Lost*. Hagar’s transgression, like Satan’s, involves the challenging of a father figure and an ensuing casting out and rejection by him. Needless to say, Jason Currie is not God, although as one critic has noted he habitually calls on “religious authority to sanction his notions of dominance” (Hinz 84); he even comes to embody divine omnipotence in his daughter’s eyes: “God might have created heaven and earth and the majority of people, but Father was a self-made man, as he himself had told us often enough” (13). But if Jason Currie is “self-made,” his daughter definitely is not, as he reminds her when she returns home

from the young ladies' academy in Toronto. While she therefore settles in to "reimburse him for what he'd spent" (38) on her education, her rancour at having to serve in his house festers until marriage to Bram presents a viable means of escape. Given her father's autocratic nature and the fact that she has quite literally been created in his image, a confrontation seems all but inevitable; when it occurs, their battle is fittingly presided over by the spirit of "Michael with the flaming sword" (41), the archangel sent by God to drive Adam and Eve from Paradise. Hagar strikes first with the revelation that she intends to marry Bram. Momentarily stunned, her father looks "as though destruction were a two-edged sword, striking inward and outward simultaneously" (41), and then recovers to hurl back at her the argument that no decent girl would marry without parental consent. Hagar, "drunk with exhilaration at [her] daring" (42), threatens that she will do it, a decision leading directly to the loss of Heaven and all her woe.

Hagar discovers, ironically, that destruction is a two-edged sword, for no bells ring out on her wedding day and no family member attends the service. At her reception, she shimmers and flits about "like a newborn gnat, free" (43), her demeanour suggesting that she has not immediately lost her original brightness; but the insect imagery foreshadows her impending decline, as does the natural choir that celebrates her nuptials: "the frogs had come back to the sloughs and sang like choruses of angels with sore throats . . . and the bloodsuckers lay slimy and low, waiting for the boys' feet" (43). The allusion to frogs evokes Satan's first temptation of Eve, when disguised as a toad he whispers in her ear where she sleeps, and thereby complements the inherent treachery of the bloodsuckers lying in wait. What awaits Hagar is the physical Hell into which she has wilfully plunged, the Shipley farm with its dilapidated frame house, the antithesis of the antimacassared brick palace from which she has been evicted.

Once deprived of her father's influence, Hagar quickly loses the spark of life and with it her natural lustre. Her determination to make a Heaven of Hell is, like the arch-fiend's, destined to fail, and it is only with great difficulty and pride that she can sustain the illusion in her own mind. She learns that she cannot clean or furnish the house as she would like, and that she cannot refine Bram's behaviour as she had hoped. His one concession to comfort for their bedroom is a grotesque piece of secondhand linoleum patterned in parrots with "stiff unnatural feathers" and "sharp-beaked grins," a fitting adornment for a room that remains as cold as charity in winter and as hot as hades in summer. As Pierre Spriet has observed "separation in violence, not love, is the organizing principle of *The Stone Angel*" (321), and it is in this context that Hagar identifies with the "spit" and "fire" of the noisy sparrows that congregate outside the bedroom window, "splattering their insults in voices brassy as Mammon" (70); it is Mammon, after all, who counsels Satan's band to imitate Heaven's light and to prefer "Hard liberty before the easy yoke / Of servile pomp" (II. 256-57).

Hagar accurately characterizes her relationship with Bram in a single comment: "I'd sucked my secret pleasure from his skin, but wouldn't care to walk in broad daylight on the streets of Manawaka with any child of his" (88). Laurence here returns to the image of the bloodsuckers lying in wait, investing Hagar with the qualities of the vampire, that creature conceived of in folklore as the "living dead" and sometimes as the embodiment of Satan, the Prince of Darkness. Like Bram Stoker's Count Dracula, Hagar is descended from nobility, albeit remotely, since her grandfather Currie's title died with him; her ancestral castle is inscribed on a plaid pin as part of the Currie family crest; and like all vampires she finds sunlight and mirrors problematical. The vampire metaphor³ is particularly effective in projecting Hagar's devastating influence on others. She gains emotional nourishment and strength by feeding on the vitality of those around her, leaving them feeling empty and estranged. Her profound indifference toward her elder son Marvin (she scarcely considers him to be her own flesh and blood) ultimately drains him of all self-confidence, and even her beloved John is nervous about living alone with her in Vancouver. Thus, her returning to Manawaka to see Bram through his last days is as much a spectacle of the vampire retreating to her native soil as of Satan reverting to Hell.

THE PHYSICAL HELL that greets Hagar is the product of the drought and the Depression, which together hold Manawaka in a death grip. The Shipley farm, an extension of Bram himself, is at the very centre and appears about to expire. In the begrimed kitchen, Hagar disgustedly observes "a mammoth matriarchal fly laboring obscenely to squeeze out of herself her white and clustered eggs" (151), at which point John mockingly welcomes his mother to her "castle," implying a symbolic correspondence between her return home and this birth of pestilence. For his part, John is a veritable shade of Hell, having lost so much weight that his face looks "like a skull's" (151), whereas Bram, his eyes "mild and milky, absent of expression" (152), resembles nothing more closely than the moribund victim of an extended vampire attack. Despite her commanding presence in the house, though, Hagar is bewildered at the way John ministers to Bram with "such a zeal and burning laughter" (150), just as she is later perplexed to realize that Marvin truly loves Doris: "It's only natural, I suppose. But it seems unfamiliar to me, hard to recognize or accept" (236). John's laughter is repeated at the cemetery where they find the stone angel upended, her lips painted with lipstick. This powerful representation combines the Satanic with the Draculan, as the prostrate statue at once signifies Hagar's fallen state and evokes the white-faced, red-lipped vampire of popular legend. The immediate effect is to establish a direct opposition between Hagar's parasitic destructiveness and John's compassion in helping Bram

to die, a distinction underscored further when, after the funeral, it is John who weeps, not Hagar.

Hagar's inability to cry is highlighted on the night John is killed. Typically, she mourns her personal loss above all else and fails to perceive her own culpability in the events leading up to the accident. She is resting in the front room one sultry afternoon when John comes home with his girlfriend Arlene Simmons. The two make love on the sofa in the kitchen, unaware that Hagar lies concealed nearby on her Afghan "like an old brown caterpillar" (185). The scene closely parallels the one in which Satan spies Adam and Eve's lovemaking in the garden:

"Sight hateful, sight tormenting; thus these two
 Imparadised in one another's arms
 The happier Eden, shall enjoy their fill
 Of bliss, while I to hell am thrust,
 Where neither joy nor love, but fierce desire,
 Among our other torments not the least,
 Still unfulfilled with pain of longing pines;
 Yet let me not forget what I have gained
 From their own mouths . . .

(iv. 505-13)

Hagar, who is similarly condemned to a joyless, loveless existence, tormented by fierce desire (she continually longs for Bram's physical presence in the night), is at first "paralyzed with embarrassment" (185), and then grows irate at the couple's unmitigated nerve and lack of shame; but under the circumstances she can only fume in silence. From Adam and Eve's mouths the serpent learns about the fatal Tree of Knowledge and immediately sets about to destroy happy innocence by tempting Eve to eat the fruit. From John and Arlene the caterpillar learns of their plan to marry and promptly visits Lottie Simmons to prevent the union. And for all her professed altruism in saving the children from poverty and future pain, her motives are fundamentally selfish: "All else diminished in importance . . . when I thought what I'd gone through to get John away from just that sort of thing" (189).

Not for her son's wellbeing, then, but for her own jealous satisfaction Hagar drives John from the house to his death and her greatest loss, a prime example of how evil recoils back upon itself. Yet in the hospital John bears his mother no ill will, and even seems to comprehend the tragic irony of her fallen state. Seconds before he dies he calls out for her help in relieving his pain and then laughs knowingly: "'No.' he said distinctly. 'You can't, can you? Never mind. Never mind'" (215). He understands that she is unable to alleviate his pain because she is entirely wrapped up in her own. Following his death, Hagar moves back to Vancouver, where, in time present, she lives with Marvin and his wife Doris, and has done for seventeen years. During this time she has apparently experienced no respite from Hell, because she carries it about within her. Her first exchange with

Doris is sufficient evidence. After childishly refusing her daughter-in-law's offer of tea, she sulkily acquiesces, but then clumsily trips over the edge of her bedroom rug: "I jerk my head up like an old mare . . . at the sound of fire or the smell of smoke. Then I fall" (26). This and other references to fire in the opening pages locate us squarely in Hell, as does the allusion to the fall, but the vampire has also been at work; Doris is haggard and anaemic, whereas Marvin seems old and tired beyond his years. The ensuing performance of his tugging and hoisting to lift his mother off the floor harks back in time (forward in the narrative) to John's wrestling with the stone angel in the cemetery, and contradicts implicitly Hagar's unspoken contention that her falling is untypical.

THE DISCREPANCY between Hagar's biased portrayal of events and their natural occurrence reminds us that her viewpoint may not always be reliable. In William New's words: "Sometimes she knows lies, as when she tells Mrs. Steiner John died in the war, and wonders why, but more often . . . she does not even know" ("Every Now and Then" 88). Hagar's predicament in this regard is truly Satanic and serves to intensify her experience of the Hell within, as happens during her visit to Dr. Corby's office and in her subsequent trip to the hospital for X-rays. At Corby's she resents his cheerful manner as much as the indignity of his poking and prodding; and her impotence is further magnified in the "dungeon" of the hospital, where she envisions herself "in the pit of hell," helplessly enveloped by "a darkness absolute" (97). The flashing lights of the medical equipment dazzle her eyes but "illuminate nothing," and her ears are assailed by disembodied voices "babbling and plotting somewhere in the vault's dank air" (97). As the time drags on, she fancies that she has been "kept in storage here too long" and "may disintegrate entirely" (97) if suddenly exposed to sunlight, a vampire's enduring fear. This denotes a continuation of the imagery that characterizes her visit to Silverthreads, which is destined to be her next "castle" if Marvin and Doris have their way. The "mausoleum" of a Rest Home is approached through black iron gates, and Hagar, mummified in her "shroud of pillows" (83), has the impression of being "embalmed alive" (84), another reference to the living dead. Again in accordance with the vampire legend whereby Dracula transforms himself at will into a wolf, Hagar is astonished at her own ill-mannered recriminations and wonders how she has "descended to such a snarl!" (86). And it is in this context that she recalls sucking her secret pleasure from Bram's skin.

Determined like Satan never to submit or yield, Hagar rejects incarceration and escapes to Shadow Point. There she embarks on her most agonizing descent into the psychological Hell she has nurtured within herself since John's death. The steps leading down to the beach are "notched into the hillside" (133), not unlike

the terraces of Dante's Hell, but once her feet touch bottom she is exhilarated by the illusion of independence. Though her confidence is shaken momentarily when she notices that she has no water, she draws comfort from the self-deluding philosophy of Hell: "One day at a time — that's all a person has to deal with. I'll not look ahead. I shall be quite comfortable here. I'll manage splendidly" (135). Her discovery of an old brass scale without weights reassures her that "nothing can be weighed here and found wanting" (136); but just as God's weighting of the scales in Gabriel's favour over Satan in *Paradise Lost* confirms the Devil's inherent weakness, so Hagar's false bravado is quickly shown for the prevarication it is. Her attempt to pray finds her "wanting" spiritually, because "it works no better than it ever did," whereupon she resolves with vain defiance that if she cannot alter her past, then neither will she accept it, "not even if [she's] damned for it" (142).

With respect to its overall significance in the story, Shadow Point is, as the name implies, a place where Hagar confronts the bedeviling shadows of her past, chief among them Bram's death and John's fatal accident. Her frightened solitude at the cannery elicits recollections of the former, while an Edenic scene of two children playing house on the beach calls up the latter. Her initial enjoyment of the children's innocent play is reminiscent of her counterpart's when he first sees Adam and Eve and forewarns of their impending change, "when all these delights / Will vanish and deliver ye to woe" (iv. 367-68). Hagar likewise senses imminent change ("He'll become fed up in a minute. I long to warn her — watch out, watch out, you'll lose him" [168]) and then feels compelled to meddle in the children's game as she once interfered with John and Arlene. She tempts them with "real food," though realizes almost immediately that their mothers probably forbade them to accept it from strangers; the children run hand in hand from the beach (Adam and Eve leave Paradise walking hand in hand) "as though their lives depended on it" (169). Appropriately, when Hagar samples the forbidden food, her mouth fills with a "bitter bile taste" (170), much as Satan's cohorts are deceived by apples that turn to "bitter ashes" (x. 566) on the tongue. Immediately following this episode Hagar suffers her last physical fall and, upon torturously hoisting herself up, proclaims herself proud as Lucifer at the achievement.

Hagar's principal encounter at the Point is with Murray Lees, who is the mirror wherein she sees reflected her own tragedy, and given her vampiric nature she has always had problems with mirrors. According to folklore, a vampire casts no reflection in the looking glass, and Hagar contends that she has never seen her true image in one either. In the Manawaka public Rest Room, for instance, she discerns only the ravaged features of an impoverished drudge, and more recently her bedroom mirror discloses an equally unpalatable "puffed face purpled with veins" (69). Murray Lees functions as just such a mirror and Hagar reacts accordingly. His arrival is heralded by the wolfish baying of dogs which, like

Milton's hellhounds Sin and Death, signal the death of the spirit by killing the seagull Hagar has previously injured.

Under the influence of cheap wine, which Hagar unwisely shares, Lees relates the story of how his son died in a house fire, causing him to wonder if perhaps he had left a cigarette burning in the basement and had thereby started the blaze. Hagar's response that "No one's to blame" (209) is glib and self-serving in the light of what Lees has just described and what we subsequently learn about her own involvement in John's death. She has always deflected personal blame by arguing that John knew her well enough not to take her harsh words seriously, but as the wine begins to cloud her mind she inadvertently blurts out the incriminating details of that terrible night. Thus, evil rebounds upon itself once more, a fact verified in physical terms when Hagar throws up all over the floor. The best she can manage by way of reassuring her companion is "a parody of a smile, a serpent's grin" (220), and this directly qualifies her imagined reconciliation first with John and then with God. At this her lowest point in the story, Hagar has become the embodiment of evil in true gothic fashion, a grotesque both in physical and in spiritual terms; it is entirely fitting, therefore, that her X-rays should reveal an internal malignancy and that Marvin and Doris should find her alone at the cannery, lying in her own vomit. She is, like her fallen prototype, an object lesson in the destructiveness of pride. The question is whether she remains, like him, unrepentant and unredeemed.

THE ANSWER IS FINALLY a matter of personal interpretation, for Laurence offers no definitive statement one way or the other. Such uncertainty as exists derives in part from the confusion Hagar experiences after her night with Lees. She awakens with the unhappily clear memory of having drunk with and slept beside a complete stranger, but acknowledges that it was not so dreadful; she resents Marvin's appearance at the cannery, yet admits in her heart her relief to see him; she is glad when Lees goes away for good, but feels unaccountably blessed to have met him. In addition, Laurence juxtaposes images of reconciliation and hope with those of isolation and despair. For example, the crackers and wine the vagrants share add a religious dimension to their communion, but Hagar is unable to keep them down. Marvin's heroic struggle to drag his mother back up the earthen steps to safety is a symbolic ascent from the underworld, but Hagar makes the climb with her eyes closed, certain they will never reach the top. And upon closer scrutiny, her two so-called "free acts" are not as selfless as she deceives herself into believing. In fetching a bedpan for her young roommate, she has like Satan been temporarily abstracted from her own nature and rendered "Stupidly good, of enmity disarmed" (ix. 465) by Sandra's innocence of pain and humiliation: "She

shouldn't have to find out these things at her age" (268); but again like the arch-fiend, who swiftly recovers from his abstracted wonder at Eve's "graceful innocence" (ix. 459), Hagar questions whether she has done the deed for Sandra or for herself. Similarly, when she becomes aware that she can only release herself by releasing Marvin, she wilfully lies to him as an alternative to begging his forgiveness. Her rationalization that a lie is not a lie if spoken with "what may perhaps be a kind of love" (274) demonstrates how self-delusive she has become; words like "may," "perhaps," and "kind of" indicate how foreign to her is any definition of love. The fact that Marvin readily accepts the lie and is comforted by it is therefore no credit to her, but rather highlights simultaneously the extremity of his personal need and the abiding impotence of evil, symbolized nowhere more forcefully than in Hagar's confinement to a straitjacket, a transformation analogous in spirit and kind to the punishment God inflicts on Satan: "A monstrous serpent on his belly prone, / Reluctant, but in vain, a greater power / Now ruled him, punished in the shape he sinned" (x. 514-16).

Laurence's purpose, then, is not to imply full or even partial redemption for Hagar, but I think instead to establish its possibility independent of her and, in so doing, to bring her to a clearer apprehension of the magnitude of her loss. As ever, Milton's angel provides an important referent. Standing on the brink of Paradise, he ponders his recent fall to this effect: its cause was his proud inability to bear the immense debt of gratitude to his Creator; now, his supremacy in Hell prevents submission, because his dread of shame among his followers far exceeds his present misery; but even if he could repent, he would surely relapse, and in any case God is as far from granting pardon as he is from begging it. Thus, the Devil slyly shifts responsibility for his damnation from himself to God. In these terms, Hagar also stands unredeemed, though not unenlightened regarding her situation. Like Satan, she could never accept her father's plans for her, or indeed "bear to feel indebted" (230) even to the nurse who dispenses medication in the hospital. Additionally, she perceives with anguish and regret that pride and the "brake of proper appearances" (261) have negated every joy she might have had in life, and she accounts herself "unchangeable, unregenerate," (260) so that supplication to God is unthinkable: "*Our Father* — no. I want no part of that. All I can think is — *Bless me or not, Lord, just as You please, for I'll not beg*" (274); accordingly, she subtly thrusts the burden of her salvation onto God's shoulders. With Hagar rejecting salvation in this way, we must look elsewhere for the promise of redemption, notably to her granddaughter Christina,⁴ who like Christ in *Paradise Lost* represents hope for the future. Hagar confirms this, despite herself, when she bequeaths to Tina her mother's ring, thereby linking her granddaughter with the meek, docile woman who died giving her birth. Although Hagar, like Satan before her, disdains meekness in all its guises, she is apparently helpless to prevent this New Testament virtue from inheriting the earth.

Finally, the extent to which Hagar Shipley repeatedly subverts life-enhancing impulses in herself and others marks the extent to which she personifies evil in the Manawaka world. Indeed, her dominant characteristics — pride, envy, anger, selfishness, bigotry, among others — are the very ones Rachel, Stacey, Vanessa, and Morag battle against with varying degrees of success. This is not to suggest that Laurence either affirms through Hagar the formal constraints of Milton's religious philosophy or subscribes to the Puritan doctrine of predestination. Rather, I believe the creation of Hagar represents her humanistic and artistic response to the tragic irony of the Satantic predicament: the potential of self-deluding pride to strike inward and outward simultaneously, for proof of which she needed to look no further than her own grandfather.⁵ Moreover, the introduction of classic vampire imagery effectively takes Hagar's dilemma out of a strictly religious context by placing it in a modern Gothic construct. To be sure, there is grace and the promise of redemption in Laurence's vision, but Hagar eschews them even at the last and knowingly defeats herself in accordance with the provisions of free will: "I'll drink from this glass, or spill it, just as I choose" (175). I believe the wonderfully ambiguous "And then —" that concludes the novel implies that Hagar does in fact spill the water, rendering her final grasp for independence as futile as her escape to Shadow Point. Like Satan, she can traverse the miles to alter her estate, and she can distort language to mollify her guilty pride, but she cannot escape the Hell within.

NOTES

¹ For analysis of the story of Hagar in Genesis see Sandra Djwa's "False God's and the True Covenant: Thematic Continuity between Margaret Laurence and Sinclair Ross," *Journal of Canadian Fiction*, 1, 4 (Fall 1972), 43-50; see also Claudette Pollack's "The Paradox of *The Stone Angel*," *Humanities Association Review*, 27, 3 (Summer 1976), 267-75; and Frank Presando's "In a Nameless Land: Apocalyptic Mythology in the Writings of Margaret Laurence," *The Canadian Novel Here and Now*, ed. John Moss (Toronto: NC Press Ltd., 1978), pp. 81-92. For analysis of the story of Hagar in Galatians see William New's "Introduction to *The Stone Angel*," rpt. in *Critical Views on Canadian Writers: Margaret Laurence*, ed. William New (Toronto: McGraw-Hill Ryerson, 1977), pp. 135-42. Pollack also discusses the Lear story in "The Paradox of *The Stone Angel*," as does Douglas Killam in "Notes on Symbolism in *The Stone Angel*," *Etudes Canadiennes / Canadian Studies*, 11 (December 1981), 89-103. Eleanor Johnston develops the relationship between Hagar Shipley and the Ancient Mariner in "The Quest of *The Diviners*," *Mosaic*, 11, 3 (1978), 107-17. Joan Coldwell identifies Hagar with Meg Merrilies in "Hagar as Meg Merrilies, the Homeless Gipsy," *Journal of Canadian Fiction*, 27 (Summer 1980), 92-100. And Clara Thomas suggests a link with Sara Monday in "Pilgrim's Progress: Margaret Laurence and Hagar Shipley," *Journal of Canadian Studies*, 17 (Fall 1982), 110-16.

² Robert Chambers draws a few tentative parallels between *The Stone Angel* and *Paradise Lost*, but he deliberately stops short of identifying Hagar with Satan, saying only that the general framework of her fall is similar to his. See "The Women of Margaret Laurence," *Journal of Canadian Studies*, 18 (Summer 1983), 18-26; rpt. in *Margaret Laurence: An Appreciation*, ed. Christl Verduyn (Peterborough:

Journal of Canadian Studies and Broadview Press, 1988), p. 84. While I agree that Hagar is not the equivalent of Satan in any religious sense, I believe that the parallels between them are more profound and far-reaching than Chambers indicates.

- ³ Laurence uses the vampire motif again in *The Diviners*, when she suggests that Morag would date Count Dracula if he asked her. Ironically, she does something very like that in marrying Brooke Skelton, "a prince among men" with his "aristocratic look"; at first, Morag is totally enthralled by Brooke as he draws vitality from her, but when they move to a castle-like apartment that she calls "the Tower," she slowly regains her sense of perspective by writing a novel entitled *Spear of Innocence*. Significantly, the book's dust jacket depicts "a spear proper, piercing a human heart," the accepted method of killing a vampire.
- ⁴ In an interview with Matt Cohen, Laurence revealed that the name "Christie" in *The Diviners* was deliberately chosen to signify "a kind of Christ figure." See "Rebel Angel," *Books in Canada*, 13 (February 1984), 7. There is every reason to believe that Christina's name was selected with equal care and similar import. The fact that Tina does not appear physically in the book demonstrates that the Christ figure is appropriately absent from this vision of Hell; ironically, though, it is Tina's move back East that indirectly generates the story, depriving Hagar of a full-time baby-sitter and thereby calling up the spectre of Silverthreads.
- ⁵ Laurence often identified Hagar with her Grandparents' generation, and indeed I believe the tension at the heart of Hagar's depiction represents that underlying Laurence's strained relationship with her Grandfather Simpson, a relationship based on conflict that was not finally resolved until worked through imaginatively in the Vanessa Macleod stories. Accordingly, Hagar embodies the more destructive propensities of Grandfather's generation as Laurence initially perceived and experienced them. It is in this context only that Hagar's fate is predestined, to the extent that blind adherence to a rigid moral and social code necessarily precludes the sympathetic tolerance of any other.

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AT THE JUNGFRÄU

Ralph Gustafson

1

I suppose the heavenly gates swing outward
 And aerialists see there equivalents
 Of what we have on athletic earth
 Of worth and wear and love and coming
 Spring? We are plainly here,
 Yet (for all the gloom and doom)
 Make as insistent stands and breathless
 Landings as any performed in heaven.