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## **Analysing Margaret Laurence's *The Stone Angel* in Feminist Perspective**

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### **Abstract**

Women are largely regarded as weak and reliant on others by the majority of people in society. This statement is totally illogical and cannot be agreed upon in its entirety. There are women who struggle through their lives on their own, who must confront the challenges that life throws at them with no one by their side, and who do so by lifting their heads in the face of a society that refuses to bend down to them. Such a person is Hagar, a character developed by Margaret Laurence in her novel *The Stone Angel*. Hagar is a woman who refuses to submit to the male-dominated culture in which she lives. *The Stone Angel* is a novel set in a fictional hamlet called Manawaka that takes the reader on a trip through Hagar's life and psyche. The feministic qualities of the title figure are reflected in the work of *The Stone Angel*. In *The Stone Angel*, Margaret Laurence attempts to diagnose and understand the inner struggles of the women's characters in the context of their social and political environment. Furthermore, she explores the characters' personal lives from within their own awareness in order to study their relationships with one another and to assess their potentiality. Laurence attempts to assist women in developing a more positive identity since she strongly disapproves of the negative and harmful self-image that Canadians have developed for themselves and wants to see them regain their genuine selves, which she believes they have lost.

**Keywords:** Individualisation, Negative Self-Image, Neurosis, Self-Actualization

In the context of feminism, it is concerned with redefinition of the world on the basis of the experiences and locations of women, taking into account their oppression and subordination. Feminist critique has as its primary objective or goal the dismantling of the patriarchal structure. This novel's feminist perspective might be defined as a form of backgrounding, as there is hardly little visible treatment of these subjects throughout the novel. Laurence acknowledges Hagar's share of blame, and she asserts that the pressures of patriarchal standards, which resulted in Hagar's stubbornness and pride, have damaged both men and women. She can be associated with the stone that serves as the novel's major image and represents Hagar's pride and blindness, which are both represented by the stone. Her daughter's father, Jason Currie, fosters the development of male qualities in her while overlooking the development of certain female virtues that he expects her to demonstrate in the future. What Hagar fails to recognise is that a lady is, first and foremost, a lady. In this piece, we can see the effects of an education that attempts to make women ornamental and that will keep her reliant on her male partners. Her feeling of self-worth is a crucial issue that runs throughout the narrative.

Hagar's Extreme Difficulty in Getting Her Point Across It is possible to regain memories of the past by visiting a certain period in time in *The Stone Angel*. Every aspect of Hagar's character development throughout the novel illustrates her considerable difficulties in interacting with other people - even those who are closest to her. Hagar rejects her son's suggestion to sell the house since she is well aware that doing so will result in her being forced to go into Silver threads, a nursing home for the elderly. Her unwillingness to leave stems from her attachment to the house in which she has lived for virtually all of her life, as well as her unwillingness to confront her failing physical state and the realisation that she has become a burden on her son and daughter-in-law. (The Stone Angel 36) Hagar has two distinct personalities. On the one side, there is Hagar, who has been taught the advantages and disadvantages of the importance of appearance, as well as the worldly and heavenly benefits of leading a respectable life. Meanwhile, the Hagar is driven by the need to uncover 'some truer picture unimaginably remote' from which she is born. It is apparent that the storey is progressing steadily across the rocky terrain of the present to a past that has been redeemed when, during the night spent in the ancient cannery and in her disturbed state of mind, she mistakes Murray Ferney Lees for John and seeks a new understanding. When Marvin and Doris arrive at the cannery, we find that Hagar is nearing the end of her life.

Hagar Shipley is distinguished by her sense of accomplishment. She has a strong sense of self-worth that is unwavering and unwavering. It has an impact on her interpersonal connections, her social engagements, and her family. Her father was the source of this characteristic. When Hagar recounts the stone angel, she is referring to "my mother's angel, which my father brought in pride to mark her bones and announce his succession." This is the first time in the storey that pride is mentioned. (The Stone Angel 3) When Hagar is an adult, she still retains the sense of accomplishment she had as a child. Because of her lack of coordination and arthritis, which leads her to trip and fall, she is quite frustrated. It was Hagar's arrogance and stubbornness that resulted in her unsuccessful marriages and a lack of affection in her personal life. Her excessive self-esteem causes her to lose her relationship with her father, brother, and spouse. It ultimately results in the death of her own son, John. Her overwhelming sense of self-worth was the reason she was unable to express love or affection to anyone in her immediate vicinity. She was taught from an early age not to express her feelings because she was too self-conscious to allow others to see her vulnerability. Hagar was too proud to pretend to be her frail mother, even for the sake of her sick brother, who was dying of cancer. Despite the fact that Hagar married Bram, she did not feel any romantic feelings for him. Hagar's admiration for her husband stemmed only from his physical appearance. She never told him how she felt about him: "... I never told him how I felt about him. "I never said anything out loud." (The Stone Angel 81.) Hagar's neurotic problems are caused by her sense of spiritual superiority. Hagar's pride also harmed her relationship with her son John, whom she loved dearly. When John invited Arlene to stay with him, Hagar was too proud to accept her and refused to let her in. They were eventually murdered in a vehicle accident, and Hagar afterwards recognised that she should have compromised in order for them to have survived. It was too late for her to recognise that her pride had gotten in the way of her son's pleasure, and she was unable to express any feelings following her son's death. The significance of the title *The Stone Angel* comes into play at this point. Hagar was unable to shed a single tear, in the same

way as the stone angel stands hard, set, and devoid of any feelings. She remained still as if she were a block of ice. This reminds me of Alexander Pushkin's work *No Tears*, which I enjoy reading. It's a lovely lyrical poem, to be sure. The speaker of the poem is a lover who learns of the death of his beloved along the course of the poem. He speaks about his lover's demise without shedding a single tear from his eyes. When he received the news of her death, he was unable to elicit any emotional response from his lover. The messenger delivered the news of her death to him, and he was as stunned as a stone. He reminisces on his time spent with her in the past. He doesn't have any tears to shed on her behalf. Hagar is also as stone as she is when she hears the news of her husband's death. She also does not express sorrow for her husband's death. As a result, the lover and Hagar may be likened to one another and the stone angel can be associated with them. Despite the fact that she is suffering from a terrible illness and has been ordered to remain in bed, Hagar remains the self-assured lady she has always been. Hagar is always thinking about her life and her accomplishments, and she summarises by stating:

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 With me and they spread out from me and shackled all I touched. Oh, My two, my dead. Dead by your hands or by mine? Nothing can take away those years.  
(The Stone Angel 292)

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