



Discovery of Self through Language from the Perspective of Margaret Laurence's *The Stone Angel*

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Article History	Abstract
<p>Received: 06 June 2023 Revised: 05 Sept 2023 Accepted: 14 Oct 2023</p> <p>CC License CC-BY-NC-SA 4.0</p>	<p>Search for self is the ultimatum of anybody's life where the realization of their life sprouts with highly endowed discovery. The freedom from despair, destruction, and conflict emerges with the highly evacuated spirit of discontentment. Self-discovery touches the core of the soul when one is alive or on the verge of death. The study aims to converge on the retaliated experience of an old woman who is struck with the concept of 'pride' where no room for concern and love for her kith and kin even for herself. The revisit of the past enables her to realize her sense of in-human approach with her deep-rooted sense of class consciousness. The language of despair and destitution of the protagonist witnesses the enlarging vision of her soul in which seclusion resides. The research shows way for further studies on 'communication gaps' between the characters.</p> <p>Keywords – Self, language, communication, discovery, experience</p>

1. Introduction

Self-confidence is the power of autonomy one senses in the execution of all emotions. The progressive life structure and the discovery one makes during the lifetime decides the altitudes of their entire life span. Verbalizing the inner emotion dispels the constant fathom of understanding between individuals. The purpose of life exposes the best acquaintances only when the language is what they use. Discovering the inner self is a process that altitudes how life is envisaged. Learning new patterns of life involves the reconstruction of one's perception. Especially when it comes to decision-making, the pattern of life and languages speak volumes of the consequences that lead to the perception of spoken words. Language proves to be as important as life to communicate with the inner self and the decision that one supposed by the effects of their conversation. Communication bridges the gap between the individuals' perception and their conflicting inner selves.

Most of the communication strategies of people comprise doubts, fears, and hopes. The focus of the communication depends on the potential and the impacts the inner 'self' has. As people grow age and experience also tend to improve through that. The outer image would have a negative influence through compliments and criticism. These compliments and criticisms have a great impact on the person. The constant emphasis on the 'self' to the society's perspective tends to be the strive of the entire life.

“Something that seems like a small intervention can have cascading effects on things we think of as stable or fixed, including extroversion, openness to new experience, and resilience.”
(Begley, 2008)

states Carol Dweck, a psychology researcher at Stanford University. More research is to be necessary to understand the common psyche of the individual. How the individual needs to respond to the outlook of society is the major challenge in every aspect of life. The self-image of the person and the construction of it is the focus of anybody's life. The same is expressed in Margaret Laurence's *The Stone Angel* where the discovery of self happens only when the circumstances force her to understand the 'self'.

The challenges of the author, who was born in Neepawa, Manitoba, include losing her mother at a young age and being forced to live in her maternal grandfather's house. These experiences play significant parts in the

creation of several fictional outfits. She rose to prominence as a writer in Canadian women's literature. *The Diviners* (1974) and *A Jest of God* (1966) were the winners of the Governor General's Award for fiction. Her success with children's books and short stories was also notable in elevating her to membership in the Writers' Union of Canada and the Writers' Trust of Canada. In 2018, the Government of Canada recognized her work as having national historic value. Margaret Laurence's talent persisted in her poems and the translations she published after leaving her position as a reporter at the *Winnipeg Citizen*. She went from being a young, active woman to taking part in the renowned first-hand expressionist of rising nations through the experience of her migration. She insisted on discussing historical and literary topics. *This Side Jordan*, her debut book, demonstrated the determined capacity of the human spirit in a world where everything takes on a bizarre order.

Her early childhood is chronicled in the second book, *The Stone Angel*, which then centers on the character Hagar Shipley, who has already written a whole biography of the Prairie way of life. The entire narrative is focused on the author's journey toward self-awakening and independence. By creating Manawaka, the setting for the majority of the events, she has replaced her real world with an imaginary one. As a narrative of her existence in the make-believe world of entity, a number of her short works and novels are set there.

She then produced *A Jest of God*. The protagonist of the narrative is Rachel Cameron, who endures a torturous summer in Manawaka while maintaining a tenacious attitude. Based on the death of her parents and the changes she underwent as a result of her grief, *A Bird in the House* is also fully autobiographical. Self-realization is the main preoccupation, as both the author and the character reveal themselves. *The Fire-Dwellers* comes next on the list of her autobiographical depictions. Stacey, a helpless mother of ours, struggles like a typical, hopeless lady in Vancouver because of her marriage to a meager salesperson. Through the depiction, the author makes clear her extraordinary capacities for love, tenacity, and vitality.

The Diviners places *The Lost* among the Manawaka books that tell Morag Gunn's story. The novel also has a stream of consciousness, a comparison of the past and present, and a promise of the future. It connects Scottish settlers and Metis outlying communities as a famous Canadian fiction. Even in the children's books, the author's desire for classic conflict is clear. A mole and his buddies are the subjects of the creative story *Jason's Quest*. The stories that diligently focus on self-realization or self-reflection mainly portray the darkness and brightness. Additionally flourishing in the gates of her writings are *Six Darn Cows* and *The Olden Days Coat*.

The interest of the author in the psychological facts triggers the composition of such individuals in the writings. The marginalized sympathy is an exceptional concern in almost all the writings of Margaret Laurence. Especially in the novel *The Stone Angel*, the essence of the plot symbolizes the 'divided' self where all the individuals find one or the other means to have their superiority forgetting the integrity that the society needs. Manawaka, the small town has the uniqueness of bringing the discovery of the quest that every individual strives throughout their life span. The concern of them is to find the sense of their inner selves.

As a writer of postmodernism, Margaret Laurence's expression of self is inseparable from the character sketches. The characters of her creation resemble most of the experiences of Margaret Laurence. The loss of the parents at an early age resembles the protagonist of *The Stone Angel*. Her despair, loneliness, and insecurity are most expressive in the writings. The sense of identity is integral in the construction of her stories. As she witnessed the death of her parents at an early age, her memories of childhood retained the glimpses.

Hagar Shipley, a 90-year-old woman with a sharp mind and a proud demeanor, is propelled by the *Stone Angel*. She is cognizant of how nothing submits to her rage. Her willful attempts to thwart her son's attempts to treat her in the hospital serve to reinforce her perception of her impending death. Her choice to flee her house and her ongoing involvement with the past provides a window into the entirety of her human struggle. She was always driven to confront nature by the turbulence in her head. The first-person narrative's stream of consciousness is presented. Hagar eventually rises to the fore due to her battles with aging and her disease. The 10 chapters of the book alternate between the present and the past frequently. The 10 chapters of the book alternate between the present and the past frequently. The best representation of Manawaka, a rural region of Canada where class consciousness and conservative beliefs predominated, may be found in this book. Everyone is disturbed by and confronts the "egoistic" behavior as a bad aspect of the fantasy.

How it irks me to have to take her hand, allow her to pull my dress over my head, undo my corsets and strip them off me, and have her see my blue-veined swollen flesh and the hairy triangle that still proclaims with lunatic insistence a non-existent womanhood. (Hagar, p. 77)

She gets frustrated when her daughter-in-law tries to assist her while she is in bed.

The story's core depicts the old woman's daily activities in the upstairs bedroom she shared with her older son Marvin. Hagar flees to an isolated location called Shadow Point as soon as she learns that her son will be sent to a nursing facility once she sells the house she bought with her earnings. Her son finds her in the cave when she becomes ill from spending the night there and takes her to the hospital. She then makes mental trips from the present to the past. In the story's present-day setting, the actual events were taking place.

The people in Hagar's life, particularly the men, have a significant impact on how she lives. She is required to learn class consciousness from her successful self-made businessman father, Jason Currie, who insists on it. It is obvious that she resembles her cold-blooded, cold-hearted father because of her mother's death and the fact that she was raised by a housekeeper from a young age. Hagar doesn't even weep or display any facial expressions of emotion when she is beaten by her father. Her brothers lacked aptitude and were quite hesitant. Despite emulating her father, she developed her cold demeanor as a result. She shows the distant relationship she has with other people by refusing to care for her injured brother who just so happened to fall into the pond and by showing no concern for her sons. As soon as she graduates from high school, she feels obligated to assist her father in running his business. Instead of seeing her father's trust and respect as a sign of authority and power over him, she interprets it as such. Her goal has been to express her desire to become a teacher. She weds a lower-class man, Brampton "Bram" Shipley, in a move that goes against her father's wishes financially. Her father doesn't respond, she is taken from this world, and she loses her father's inheritance. He doesn't work hard and only makes enough to get by, therefore his marriage to her is unpleasant. Let someone else make a profit," Bram replied simply. "I've got enough to buy what I want."

The awareness of her emotions that were laid undisturbed in the minds of the people is found its convenient replicas in her work. The result of her protagonists' struggles to find themselves through their anxieties is the outcome of their extreme self-realization. The difference between the needs of their inner nature and the unchangeable outer existence complies with the woven stories. Most of the protagonists live in the past, create anxiety over the present, and realize themselves in the future. Their way of comprehending life enlarges their vision of their selves. Even the case of Hagar is the same and her realization cuddles her only at the age of ninety which she has been neglecting from the beginning.

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. Hagar, p. 292

The house in Vancouver is the one that conquers all her confidence since that is the outcome of her hard work. She lives with her son Marvis and her daughter-in-law, Doris both of them are also in their sixties. The past she carries along is evidenced in the things that she loves to have in the house, the oak chair that belonged to her father, Jason Currie, a cut glass decanter, and her wedding gift from Bram Shipley as her native identity. "If I am not somehow contained in them and in this house. Something of all change caught and fixed here, eternal enough for my purposes. Thus, I do not know where I may be found at all." (p.36)

Though she feels ill and uncomfortable walking with her fat body, she gives very little care to it. She refuses the nurturing of her son and daughter-in-law too. Her rudeness over the people who help her and her resentment over people distanced her from the concern. Her cruelty turns even uglier. The sympathy she demands and the tautness she makes with others prove her indomitable spirit. The adamant spirit refuses to change even at the age of ninety. She tries using everybody exceptionally for herself but turns very rude to their selves.

The entire story of the novel revolves around the perspective of Hagar Shipley and the memories she possesses from the past till the end of the novel. The alternative consciousness she has between present and past conflicts with her everyday living. The constant awakening of 'self' retaliates the real meaning of life and living. Communication in terms of hate is the major cause of all her troubles and the realization at the end proves a little solace. In every aspect of her communication, she proves the constant conflict that she doesn't allow to

destroy the mind. At the beginning of the novel, Hagar cries "Oh, my lost men. No, I will not think of that."(p.07)

There is no control over her thoughts in her relationships, especially with the men in her life, her father, her two brothers, her husband, and her two sons. Her stubbornness lasts till her old age as she possesses from her mother like a stone.

I can't say it. Now, at last, it becomes impossible for me to mouth the words—I'm fine. I won't say anything. It's about time I learned to keep my mouth shut. But I don't. I can hear myself saying something, and it astounds me. (Hagar, p. 303)

Hagar adds no appreciation to the son or daughter-in-law because she is sharp-tongued and devoid of any care that she rejects from them. As her father Jason Curie sets the model of a harsh disciplinarian, she also follows him in every single aspect of her life. Though she marries without the will of her father to teach him a lesson, she grows her dislike over time. The unhappy marriage never led her to realize her pride but the ailments she has in old age. Her communication with her father gives way for her to groom her pride rather than removing that. Her father never attempts to visit Hagar or her sons because he dislikes the marriage and neglects to see her sons too. The manners of Bram Shipley and his poverty provoke her to behave rudely and obstinate in the decisions she makes for the rest of her life. She recounts when Bram sells eggs to a nearby household as there are no other means.

“And yet – here’s the joker in the pack – we’d each married for those qualities we later found we couldn’t bear, he for my manners and speech, I for his flaunting of them.”

Though she needs care from her son and daughter-in-law, she adds no credit to them through her adverse tongue she furs their anger. She remains adamant and finds no recluses in her son. She never appreciates and understands her fellow beings. The freedom that she longed to have made her feel lonely in the shattered building after her son and daughter in law leaves her. The opinion of selling the house that she bought with her hard-earned money sets her apart from the family on the seashore. The meeting of the strangers and the help she receives from them is the cause of her realization to be a human with kindness. On seeing her condition in the abandoned building her confidence is swept away by the drinking wanderer. After she faints with no energy, she finds herself in the hospital and struggles with the loss of her freedom, comfort, and the external noise in the hospital. She murmurs that,

“The room at night is deep and dark, like a coal scuttle, and I’m lying like a lump at the bottom of it. I’ve been wakened by the girl’s voice, and now I can’t get back to sleep again. How I hate the sound of a person crying. She moans, snuffles wetly, and moans again. She won’t stop. She’ll go on all night like this, more than likely. It’s insufferable.”

Her inner pain is the outcome of words she utters and the communication withdraws her spirit of pride and her condition of helplessness. The deprived sleep is because of the patients who groan nearly as she is admitted to the common ward. She thought that it was below her conception of being a superior being. “She finds her judgment challenged by the confusion of ninety years of experience”. (J.M.Kertzer 01)

The egoistic communication of Hagar even for the prayer shows the highly ingrained pride that disallows her to connect even to the higher power. This particular confession happens when she is admitted to the hospital while approaching her death. “Bless me or not, Lord, just as You please, for I'll not beg”. (Hagar, p. 307)

Hagar confesses at a point that her pride is the one that stops her being a kind-hearted human. She states “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” (292). She realizes the love of her son and his desperate expectation of affection and blessing. Relieving from the chain of pride she openly confesses that she loves Marvin than John, her younger son though it is a lie. Her contentment is expressed as “The dead don’t bear a grudge nor seek a blessing. The dead do not rest uneasily. Only the living” (304). She also understands that even death cannot relieve her from the lie she uttered to her son. Finally, she accepts the flaws in her and emerges as the stoned angel in her death. The predominant gaps she makes in her communication with the people of the community split her soul apart from living a comfortable life.

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