



The Stone Angel

James W. Nichol (Dramatist) , Margaret Laurence (Novelist)

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It is the late 1960s, and Hagar Shipley's days are drawing to an end. In the course of an afternoon, Hagar's life unfolds: her childhood in a small prairie town, her Scottish immigrant father, the tumultuous relationship with her now-estranged husband, her sons, and their partners. Based on the novel by Margaret Laurence.

The Stone Angel Details

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Author : James W. Nichol (Dramatist) , Margaret Laurence (Novelist)

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From Reader Review The Stone Angel for online ebook

Ariel says

This is where I run into a problem with the ratings.

You see, *The Stone Angel* is a fantastic book; amazingly well-written, the character doesn't break at all and is so strong I could be tricked into believing it was the author herself, and the prose is just beautiful.

That having been said, I didn't like it. It was depressing, frustrating, and made me feel horrible reading it; I really cannot stand "CanLit"'s tendency towards the bleak and dirty underside of life.

However, that does not mean it was a bad book. It means it's a wonderful book, but that my own literary prejudices and biases came into play whilst I was reading it and prevented me from enjoying it to its full potential.

Anyways. I'd still recommend it to people as a fantastic book, regardless of my own personal opinion on the tone.

Nancy Richards-Eisener says

I've read this book several times in my life. I appreciate it more as I grow older.

Hazel McHaffie says

I really enjoyed this tale of sparky old age by a Canadian writer. Hagar Shipley is a holy terror who leads her son and daughter-in-law a merry dance, but her reminiscences unpack a remarkable life. I loved her independent spirit, originality and sense of humour. Residential care just couldn't contain that free a spirit.

Rob says

2011 re-read: A bit of a different experience this time around, reading it for a class on aging in fiction. Obviously I focused on that aspect of the text more this time around, and I really have to applaud Laurence's nuanced depiction of what a terrible experience it can be, especially the question of how far children and others have to go to support their parents, and who deserves our sympathy in this situation. I kind of wish Laurence had spent more time on the long torture of Hagar's present life instead of the kind of standard life-review plotline. The prose is beautiful in a classical way, and although it was written decades ago I think Laurence serves as a great example of how the conventional realist novel can still be relevant today.

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(7/10) I think I'm mainly going to echo the other reviewers here in saying that this book is well-written, draws a tremendously real and three-dimensional character of a proud old woman approaching the end of her life, but that it didn't really grab me. Maybe it was the subject matter, which felt fairly familiar, although

maybe the tropes of kids-sending-mother-to-a-retirement-home stories weren't as established when this book was written almost fifty years ago. As other reviewers have noted, Hagar is a fairly aggravating character to spend 300 pages with. Well-written but not really recommended except for Canlit buffs.

Gold Samantha says

This book is the tale of an allegedly intelligent woman who systematically ruins her life through bad decisions made not out of desire or common sense, but spite. It is boring, depressing, and completely inappropriate for young adults.

Neil Mudde says

I have read Margaret Laurence's Stone Angels several times in my life, I am now in my 70th year, and what a different age makes.

Coming to Canada as an immigrant, this novel will always be a wonderful written Canadian Novel, I get a real sense of life on the Prairies, the smell of grass, the howling winds in the winter time.

Hagar still comes across as a creator of her own misery, no doubt learned from her staunch and to me calvinist background. Any person with a sense of selfworth would not have allowed oneself to have gotten into the predicament she did to spite her tyrant loveless Father.

Her Father was a firm believer in showing his authority by not sparing the rod, based on the false concept to "honor thy Father and Mother" regardless. This type of "Calvinistic doctrine" bases its hold on people by making them feel forever "unworthy" never "good enough" only by the grace of..... etc etc, a poor foundation to teach a young human being about ones uniqueness and selfworth as a person conceived and born as a divine human being which has every right to exist, simply by its birth and has the ability to aspire to greatness.

Little love justice and vengeance meted out in large doses.

Sadly those persons being raised in this stark loveless even violent setting often perpetuate this type of behaviour in their own family life, continuing this horrific cycle, as witnessed in this book.

Hagar now as an much older person reflects on her youth, showing little remorse but now has the feelings many older persons have of having lost the ability to choose taken away from them, being treated as people who cannot make decisions, shoved away in old folks homes, although I do feel a bit sad for her, but cannot help but feel she has created much of her own misery, as even towards the end of her life there is little sense that if she were able to do her life over again she would do it differently..

In "Stone Angel" Margaret Laurence has given us a bit of insight into her own life about, how she felt about growing older and having to depend on anyone else. She chose to take care of that part in her life herself.

Carolyn says

The movie was good but the novel was set in the late 60's when there weren't cell phone so I guess the movie was bumped ahead. This made it hard for me to reconcile the movie with my reading of the book when it first was published. Why change the era and have Hagar talking about smoking marijuana in the seventies unless it was to appeal to younger movie goers? But, hey it's about a 90 year old woman and some of us remember the 60's and liked that decade.

Jamilla Rice says

Ok. I read this when I was going through my "I haven't read any Canadian Literature besides Margaret Atwood and only her most popular books" phase. This was one of the top ten Canadian lit books of all time, so I figured I needed to read it.

It wasn't "shout from the rafters" excellent, but it was a different kind of story in that it was from the perspective of an octogenarian woman, someone that society has cast-off or patronized once reaching a state where she's deemed to be of no value to society either as a breeder or as a producer (in terms of physical work.)

The stream of consciousness point of view was also a nice surprise, reminding me of "The Jilting of Granny Weatherall". It was also very heartbreaking to see her love not being reciprocated in the relationship with her son. What an authentic asshole Laurence crafted in Johnny, and the typical martyred mother in Hagar.

Overall, it's a good read. The Canadians were right. #asusual

Favorite/Memorable Quotes:

"You bet on the wrong horse"—Neer-do-well son John, Hagar's favorite son, tells his mother after he continues to be a failure.

Sadaf says

I had to read this book for school and absolutely hated it. It was so hard to get into and was extremely boring.

Sarath Krishnan says

The Stone Angel as a Re-reading of Bible

Margaret Laurence, the most beloved author of Canada, was greatly influenced by the Biblical stories. She was a Sunday school teacher in one of the Churches of Unitarianism and during this time she wrote A Christmas Birthday Story in order to teach the children.

The Stone Angel is a re-reading of the Biblical story of Hagar. In the Bible (Book of Genesis) there is a story of a woman named Hagar who was a slave of Sara, wife of Abraham. Abraham and Sarah doesn't have children, so under her direction Abraham slept with Hagar and have a son named Ishmael.

In the Bible, the point of view of Hagar is neglected. She is more or less a negative character and also a victim of the patriarchal system. In The Stone Angel, we can find a bold woman, Hagar Shipley, who attacked the patriarchy even in old age.

Joanne says

Because I am from Canada, I had to read this in high school. I cannot express how much I hate this book. I

think it's well written but after reading this I was so depressed. The main character is so frustrating. She ruins her life by making poor choices and then is hateful to even her children.

Deb (Readerbuzz) Nance says

I never dreamed that this book would blow me away. Hagar Shipley is ninety-ish and at the end of her life. The book tells both stories of her last days as well as stories Hagar remembers about her life. What a tough bird she is, hard on her older son, indifferent to her husband. This is a book that feels very, very true. I recommend it highly and I'm adding it to my list of best reads ever. One question that nags at me: Is Hagar a relative? Can I blame it on her (and my) Scotch blood?

Nadine says

I'm always at a bit of a loss to describe my feelings about *The Stone Angel*. *I think it's really well-written. Margaret Laurence knows her shit. She can craft a sentence like Rodin crafts clay.*

At the same time, I don't like this story. At all. Elderly Hagar is a bitter awful person and while I understand her journey to the place, I don't feel any real sympathy for her.

Irene says

This felt like the literary equivalent of running your fingers over an intricately carved mahogany chest. There was a sensual pleasure, the experience of savoring exquisite craftsmanship, the delight in touching quality materials and the awareness that such beauty is given to such a straight forward function.

Sidney says

Hard to put down - painful to read. Also the first book of the year that I am thoroughly pleased to have read. I'm going to have to read the rest of the cycle.
