

The Tomorrow Tamer and Other Stories: Margaret Laurence's Anti-Colonial Fiction

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ABSTRACT

Canadian author Margaret Laurence's African fiction display the influence of colonial rule in African society. However in her collection of short stories *The Tomorrow Tamer and Other Stories* she goes a step forward and offers possible means of awakening. These stories demonstrate from many angles the effects of the process of independence on individual Ghanaians and the bewildered, anxious Europeans who were caught up in the hopes and the despairs of emergent nationhood.

This research paper discusses Laurence's short fiction in detail looking for an anti colonial perspective in the stories included in *The Tomorrow Tamer and Other Stories*.

It is true that *This Side Jordan* was the first novel by Margaret Laurence published in 1960. However, her short story 'The Drummer of All the World', written in 1954 was the beginning of her professional fiction. In fact, many of her short stories had already appeared in different publications before the publication of the novel and some of them were also acknowledged with awards. It was only in 1963 that these short stories were gathered together and published in the collection *The Tomorrow Tamer and Other Stories*, putting her stories in the rear of the chronology.

Both the stories and the novel are set in Ghana which was on the threshold of independence. As Clara Thomas states, "They demonstrate from many angles the effects of the process of independence on individual Ghanaians and the bewildered, anxious Europeans who were caught up in the hopes and the despairs of emergent nationhood". (1976, 34)

In this collection, Margaret Laurence has solved the problem of form in fiction which had always bothered her. This search for form or as she calls it the best selection for this particular flesh is dealt with in these stories in two ways. First, it has a swift paced, dramatically structured short-story which has many scenes, moving towards a climax and conclusion. Secondly, each story is a tale imbibing the traditional narrative techniques of the oral story teller. In the line of the first type fall stories like "The Drummer of All the World" "The Merchant of Heaven", "The Rain Child", etc. While the ones which remind one of the oral tradition are "The Tomorrow Tamer", "Voices of Adamo", "Gourdful of Glory", etc.

"The Drummer of All the World" is an example of a highly effective form. One may say that it is a story with nine 'scenes' and an epilogue. For the first seven scenes the narrator Matthew remembers his boyhood and youth, each scene with its own entity marks off a development in his awareness. As mentioned earlier, in *The Prophet's Camel Bell* Laurence reveals that she detested the address of 'Memsahib' for herself for it had "connotations of whiteman's burden". (14) One feels that the issue of whiteman's burden is at the centre of this short story in this collection. In fact the story begins with this idea when Matthew says "My father thought he was bringing

salvation to Africa. I, on the other hand, no longer know what salvation is". (1)

The story is narrated by Matthew, who is the son of an English missionary. He had grown up in Africa and has come back after a gap of ten years. While he was in Africa, he was brought up by an African nurse, Yaa along with her son Kwabena. In the early scenes, Matthew remembers his early life in Africa. The narration of his childhood in Africa, makes one feel that Africa was his home. The "fishing village between Accra and Takoradi" (1) was his home in every sense; even with a mother in the figure of Yaa and a brother in Kwabena. It was his home to the extent that he never noticed the discomforts of his house or the frequency of the diseases like diarrhea, malaria and yellow fever. It was his home to the extent that his mother's hidden hatred for the land and its people did not matter to him then. It was his home to the extent that he, very easily and obviously would have liked to disobey his father's orders of not going to certain places like fetish huts and unclean rivers. The Africans were his own people to the extent that he betrayed his father and told Kwabena that the father intended to destroy another fetish hut and was even deeply hurt when it actually happened. Twi was his own language to the extent that he could speak Twi better than English at the age of six. Matthew was everything his parents were not. They hated African culture, he loved it. They wanted discipline and decorum in their converts while Matthew was fond of the villagers' vitality. Matthew remembers, "This was my Africa, in the days of my childhood, before I know how little I knew it" (9) At that time, he never noticed the misery that people lived in. Clara Thomas observes:

Matthew balanced precariously between the missionary world of his home and the real world of Africa that he knew through Yaa and Kwabena. He owed duty to one, he felt, and therefore he experienced guilt for his betrayal of it, but his love was given to the other, the African world". (1976, 37)

In spite of the guilt and shame that Matthew claims to feel, one cannot help noticing his European self which was very much alive even at that time. When Kwabena used to invite him

for swimming in the river, he remembers, "Often I hesitated, some deep English fear of unclean water stirring within me". (8) When he was shown the dead girl who was about to be buried with gold earrings in her ears, he tells "I longed to steal those thin bright circles before they were wasted in the earth". (7) Thus, in spite of the fact that Matthew felt a sense of belonging to Africa and had a strong emotional attachment to the country, he always remained (and justifiably so) an alien and European for its people.

Throughout the story Matthew has a romantic view of Africa until the end when Kwabena makes him conscious of his strangerhood. He was enchanted by old Africa, the Africa of noble savage variety. So when he sees new independent Africa, he is not comfortable with the change for "The old Africa was dying, and self suddenly rootless, a stranger in the only land I could call home" (13)

Very painstakingly he realizes that he is no more accepted by his childhood companions and perhaps he never was. He realizes this when he sees hatred in the eyes of Afua which leads her to greet him as "I greet you master". (14) When he is told about Yaa's death only after many years, he is deeply hurt as "she was more mother to me than my own mother". (16) His sense of alienation becomes stronger when Kwabena replies "I shared my mother with you in exchange for your cast off khaki shorts." (16)

This makes Matthew aware of the basic relationship between the two of them which was that of the master and the servant. However, one can definitely not excuse Matthew from being a colonialist because he gives the impression that he does not like Kwabena to be a medical orderly and not a drummer, which he was in the pre-independence Africa. Afua, around whom "the children muzzled like little goats" (14) is also not as beautiful as she once was. It is then that he realizes that he was enchanted by the old Africa. He never felt its poverty and misery. Very painfully, he realizes his true feelings for Africa now :

I had always been the dreamer who knew he could wake at will, the tourist who wanted antique quaintness to remain unchanged. We were conquerors in Africa, we Europeans. Some despised her, that bedraggled queen we had unthroned, and some loved her for her still raging magnificence, her old wisdom. But all of us sought to force our will upon her. (1963,18)

O. Mannoni in *Prospero and Caliban The Psychology of Colonization*, suggests that the typical colonial is impelled to live out Prospero drama by accepting a self imposed task of educating the colonized and asserting his own superiority in the process. Mannoni explains the term Prospero complex as a strong desire to dominate and thereby suppressing the colonized and forcing his own superiority on the latter. Since the character of Prospero in Shakespeare's *The Tempest* displays these personality traits, he is called the archetypal colonizer and Mannoni labels such traits as Prospero complex when they are found in a colonizer. Matthew's father views the Africans as children and considers it to be his mission to make them grow into adults and naturally, feels superior to them. He claims

himself to be their Moses. However, by destroying their fetish huts, ironically he "broke the idols of his own people". (5) Thus the figure of Prospero, for twenty long years, tries to "force, frighten or cajole his flock away from drumming and dancing, the accompaniments of the old religion". (4) Matthew, too, is a subtle variant of Prospero complex as after acquiring his father's position he loves to see Africa as it was.

Reminding one of the British characters in *This Side Jordan*, Matthew ends up living in a double exile and disillusionment. Now he no longer belongs to the new independent Ghana as the colonial experience has made him a stranger even in the country of his birth. Towards the end, Matthew however understands the truth about salvation when he says, "I only know that one man cannot find it (salvation) for another man and one land cannot bring it to another". (18)

Brother Lemon in "The Merchant of Heaven" also arrives in Africa, taking upon himself a civilizing mission. Like Prospero he is inspired by the civilizing mission. Hence he wants to give an entirely new religion to the Africans, forcing them to forget their old one. He is, as the narrator states, "soul purifier sucking in the septic souls and spewing them back one hundred percent pure". (53) He is an American evangelist who is very enthusiastic about his mission. Patricia Morley observes, Brother Lemon "comes to Africa to acquire souls. Just souls. Bodies whether reeked with tropical disease crippled hungry or blind are not Brother Lemon's concern". (1981, 70) On the contrary, Laurence presents the character of the narrator who has been in Africa long enough to know and 'accept' the fact that he will always be an alien to them. Brother Lemon fails in his work of purifying and thereby saving souls and leaves with a sense of bewilderment. Will Retteridge, the narrator, compares him with the painting of Black Christ which was painted for the Church. He asserts :

Sometimes, when I am able to see through black and white, until they merge and cease to be separate or apart, I look at those damaged creatures clustering so despairingly hopeful around the Son of Man, and it seems to me that Brother Lemon, after all, is one of them. (77)

Laurence in this story, presents a remarkable character in the figure of Danso who resembles Victor Edusei in *This Side Jordan*. He is a cynical person who is against the Europeans. He believes that the Europeans destroy the African culture and religion. Danso very rightly, puts Brother Lemon in the line of those missionaries who fail to see that the Africans had souls and had the job "to tear the soul out of a living, body and throw the inconvenient flesh away like fruit rind." (74)

In "The Perfumed Sea" the Italian hairdresser, Mr Archipelago and his North American assistant Doree exemplify the phrase "stranger in a strange land" which first occurred to Margaret Laurence in her early days in Africa. Right in the beginning, Mr. Archipelago calls himself "flotsome", thereby accepting the fact that he belongs nowhere not even in Africa not Brother Lemon's concern". (1981, 70) On the contrary, Laurence presents the character of the narrator who has been in Africa long enough to know and 'accept' the fact that he will

always be an alien to them. Brother Lemon fails in his work of purifying and thereby saving souls and leaves with a sense of bewilderment. Will Ketteridge, the narrator, compares him with the painting of Black Christ which was painted for the Church. He asserts that in this small West African town, the wives of the imperialists provide the couple their living. They belong neither to the imperial nor to the native world. The use of the word flotsome makes one wonder whether the question of nationality is so important as to raise the conflicts of Prospero and Caliban. The sole interest of Archipelago and Doree in Africa is to earn a living which faces a serious threat in independent Ghana. The two are lost people and are drawn together in their loneliness and their sensitivity. The near future ruin calls for their partnership in crisis. The loyalty which binds them together had always helped them in critical situations as it happens now. They are saved from the business ruin due to the switching from curling the hair of the white women to straightening the hair of the Black women who finally provide them their living.

Towards the end of the story, the queue of African women outside Mr. Archipelago's shop also signifies the beginning of the journey of African women towards self actualization and self assertion. Flotsome being neither the colonizer nor the colonized can easily turn coats and colours : black or white. Their dexterity is required by human beings irrespective of colour or creed. Through such characters who live the logic of economics and not that of politics, Laurence perhaps indicates the future of the globalized politics which as we know is now being made by the multinationals determined by the logic of globalized market economy.

The title story "The Tomorrow Tamer" revolves around the conflicts inherent in the pastoral design. This short-story was awarded the Presidents Medal in 1962. The issue in question concerns the building of a bridge in a small bush village by the government and the white engineers. The very idea of the construction of something unfamiliar on their sacred river with the help of the means suggested by the whites (their conquerors) is not welcome by the villagers. Anything involving the whites faces strong resistance due to suspicion. Thus, the initial reaction is :

The fish will die from the river, and the oil palms will dwindle in the planting places and plague will come and river blindness will come and the snake will inhibit our huts because the people are dead and the strangler vine will cover our dwelling places. For our life comes from the river, and if the god's hand is turned against us, what will avail the hands of men? (87)

This fear of the villagers remind us of the resistance that Jack Laurence faced in his dam building project. Ultimately Kofi, the seventeen year old boy is selected for joining the work force. He is fascinated by the whole idea of bridge construction with the help of machines and feels great for being selected for this responsible job. The fascination and elevated position, arouse in him the feeling of inseparable loyalty towards the bridge and people involved in the project. He believes that he belongs to the bridge and to God who lives in the bridge .He is very distressed when he learns that his fellow workers will move

on when they complete this project, leaving him with those people to whom he feels superior. Therefore, he decides that in order to remain associated with the bridge for the rest of his life, he will become the priest of the bridge and tend it as long as he lives. It is again his loyalty which drives him to take the decision of painting the most difficult part of the bridge. While executing this job, in the mood of exaltation, he falls into the river and dies.

The fierce attachment of Kofi to the bridge and his fear of being separated from the group of the bridgemen reminds one of the "dependence complex" which Mannoni talks about and which Laurence herself discusses in *The Prophet's Camel Bell* in case of Abdi. Dependence complex, in Mannoni's view means a fierce attachment for a particular phenomenon (the bridge and the people associated with it in this case) to the extent of being dependent on it. Kofi had learnt to become dependent on the white bridgemen for self identification. Rofi's attachment to the bridge could be explained as the devotion of a devotee to a deity within the cosmology of the African tribe to which he belonged. So, the thought of being separated from his fellow beings was unimaginable for him. And it is this strong wish to remain associated with what he considered as his own, that finally led him to his death. It is in the interpretation of Rofi's death by both the white engineers and the villagers that Laurence conveys the difference in their cultures and cosmology. For the white engineers it was sheer idiocy while the villagers took his death as a sacrifice of the priest in order to appease the river god.

Kofi, thus, becomes a legend and a martyr. Although his mother and his widow mourn his death "even they, as they listened, felt a certain awe and wondered if he was indeed the Kofi they had known". (104) He becomes "a man consumed by the gods (who) lives forever". (104)

Another story which gives such strong sense of "dependence complex" is 'Godman's Master'. Moses Adu, a westernized African unwillingly rescues a dwarf who had been kept in a stuffy box by a village ju-ju man to use him as an oracle. He takes Godman (the dwarf) into the city and realizes that his life is gradually being dominated by this strange small being. He realizes that Godman has, with great assurance, defined their relationship as being that of master and servant, priest and a fallen human being. Initially, Moses decides to keep Godman in his house and look after him. Godman misunderstands his obvious acts of mercy and practicality as a genuine concern and takes upon himself the task of serving him loyally till death. He also develops a kind of faith in his master's wisdom ("when I am with you, I understand everything". (149) Like a typical loyal servant, as a result of the master's kind treatment, he automatically assumes right for meddling into the private life of Moses and is really happy with the prospects of marriage between Moses and Mercy.

Moreover, since Godman had been doing his household work and cooking for him, Moses himself learns to become dependent on him "All at once Moses saw that he was wondering not how the dwarf would manage alone, but how he himself would manage without Godman". (153)

Thus although this realization distresses him, he refrains from doing anything about it due to his own dependence on Godman. It is only when Mercy raises the question of wages that he realizes the actual relationship that had resulted out of the long association between the two. Thus, unconsciously and definitely unwillingly Moses is forced into the role of Prospero. He is horrified and wishes to make Godman understand that there is more to freedom than living in a box but "he and Godman were bound together with a cord more delicate, more difficult to see, than any spun by the children of Ananse. Yet it was a cord which could strangle." (155) Moses is distressed as he abhors the idea of a man buying another man. Eventually, plagued by conscience, yet anxious for liberation from the dwarf, Moses drives Godman out of the house only to see him months later in his original self.

An interesting feature in this story is the idea of a black Prospero. In view of the pastoral design, Moses "is the figure associated with science and urban life; his exposure to European ways allows him also to fall into the mentality of master" (Laney, 1980, 75) Moreover the phenomenon of a black Prospero has a positive result. Moses has the insight to recognize his part and totally reject it.

Patricia Morley gives a very interesting analysis of the three characters in this story. Moses Adu (like Moses the law giver) is Godman's first deliverer leading him out of slavery and shows him the path to freedom, for going into a position suitable to his name. The name of Godman can be interpreted in many ways like god-in-man or God's man or "man-forsaken little God" who aspires to be a free man and grows into that stature. Regarding Mercy, Moses, wife, Morley remarks "Freedom, in Laurence's fiction, is seen to be a gift which is both a mercy bestowed and also a birthright to be won through infinite desire and struggle". (1981, 69) The title is also suggestive as the story is about an African who refuses to remain in the role of master and God or human destiny, which includes freedom. While in the case of Godman, total dependence on his master is the only way he can think of for survival. So it is only a switch from an unkind master to a kind one.

Henry Kriesel states that the story can be read at many levels. He observes that it is a microcosm of the human condition in general and the African experience in particular. GodmanPira says, "I have known the worst and yet I live. I fear and fear and yet I live". (159) These words can also be applied to most of the new nations of Africa. In Godman, Laurence caricatures the dependence complex of the colonized. In fact, as Juneja observes it is Godman and not Caliban who is fully representative of the colonized. "While Caliban rebels, Godman surrenders, submits and succumbs Caliban yearns for freedom, Godman does not what it when he has a benevolent master". (1988, 192)

The difference between the two is clear when one places them in their historical context. Caliban is a witness to the rise of colonialism, Godman witnesses its fall. Consequently unlike Caliban, Godman has seen and suffered the worst of colonialism. "He is therefore, the wretched of the earth and survives in perpetual fear". (Juneja, 1988, 193)

The dependence complex found in GodmanPira is once again apparent in Adamo in the story "Voices of Adamo". As Salat states, "both the stories in the moving account of the dispossessed and lost souls, show the loss of a distinctive and whole identity as a result of the dependence complex". (1993, 40).

Adamo lost his identity and the place of his belonging with the mass death in his village due to the smallpox epidemic. And since his father said "the tree lives forever. One leaf is nothing. The tree is all". (206) Adamo craves for a place or a tribe to belong to. It is Captain Fossey of West African Regiment who provides him another identity which cures him of his feelings of loss and dispossession. He starts taking the regiment as a substitute tribe to which he now belongs forever. His existence now has significance due to the loyalties of Army life. The gentle voice of his mother which he used to hear in his exile the voice which asked, "Adamo where are you? Adamo-where are we?" (207) now answers its own question by, "Here, Adamo, you are here" (218) - thereby convincing him that the regiment is his life. After giving his total devotion and loyalty to the band, he naturally expects the security of his lost home. So when he receives the orders of his discharge through Captain Fossey, he feels that his master has betrayed him. Earlier, one of his fellow drummers had made him think about the question as to how he could like the captain, implying that the latter was not really a likable person. Now he jumps to the conclusion that betrayal was part of his nature. Moreover, Adamo used to perform his routine duties without really understanding their significance. He was asked by Major Appiah whether he knew why he must clean his boots and brass buttons. To this he gave an appearance of a doubtless certainty. However, as Major Appiah could feel, it now becomes obvious that he never really understood the ways and means of army. So the completion of five years of service had no significance for him and the discharge is taken as dismissal by him. The agent for this sorrowful event was Captain Fossey. So he must be eliminated if he wished to remain with his new home. Adamo kills his master, not realizing the consequences of his act. Even when he is sentenced to death the final sadness is ours, not his. This is because all he wants is to stay with the Regiment for the rest of his life and that he has achieved through the murder, although it is now a very short life.

The black officer Major Appiah had sensed Adamo's fierce loyalty and his illiteracy long back and is distressed. It was not death that Adamo feared. 'Yes', Major Appiah said and as he spoke he became aware of a crippling sense of weariness, as though an accumulation of centuries had been foisted upon himself to deal with somehow. 'You can stay Adamo. You can stay as long as you live'. He turned away abruptly and his boots drummed on the concrete corridor. He could bear anything, he felt, except the look of relief in Adamo's eyes". (224)

Both Adamo and GodmanPira feel betrayed when their masters ask them to leave. They have no place to go for the dependence complex has made them aliens and exiles in their own land.

Another significant feature appears, although not very clearly, in this story is the white man's double exile which is a major theme in *This Side Jordan*. Double exile is the term given

to that situation where an individual feels rootless. The most appropriate examples of this are the whites who were sent to the colonies as they were misfits in their own countries and they very obviously were not acceptable in the colonies because of their status as colonizers. Thus, they could not call either of the lands as their own and were living in exiles. Here, this feature appears in case of Captain Fosseyas :

Having hankered for England so long, he now found he did not want to return. He remembered the dump and the cold, the cockiness and the terrifying poise of the English bands men. Nostalgically, he recalled the ease of his life here, the devotion of men like Adamo. (220)

"The Rain Child" is a story which highlights Laurance's theme of stranger in a strange land. It is in this story that almost all the characters (excluding exceptions like Kwalee) exemplify this phrase. What is interesting here is the fact that both the white and the African attitudes to land presented as the reverse of what they were in *This Side Jordan*. While in the novel, we see Africans defending their culture and the English attacking the same, here we find that an African is not comfortable with her own surroundings and culture, while an Englishwoman tries hard to defend it. Ruth Ouansah is, in the words of Patricia Morley, "the African girl who is culturally white but imprisoned in a black skin". (1981,60)

Being born and brought up in England, Ruth comes to Africa with her father. She is, thus, completely alien to the African life and culture. Her initial enthusiasm of living in Africa is that of "any English school girl ... going abroad". (109) Africa, for her, is abroad though it is her own land. She is different from her fellow students in everything. She is ahead of her class in studies, nevertheless, this fact also puts her at distance from others. She is aware of her strangeness and is also sorry about it. The factor responsible for this situation is the language. Because she has lived in England and because her father always spoke to her in English (for the fear that she would be treated as an alien in England), Ruth does not speak or even understand her own language.

Ruth finds a companion in David Mackie. David, with his European background is able to match Ruth's frequency in thinking. After meeting David, the narrator observes, "The sense of adventure had returned to her and all at once, I realized why David was showing it from the outside". (124) Ruth feels that she belongs to the class of people like David which matches her level of interest. However, she forgets the hard truth about herself, although she has always remained away, she is, after all, an African because of the colour of her skin and is therefore very necessarily different from David. So, it falls hard on her when David hesitantly makes her realize that. Ruth leaves her own country in a highly frustrated state of mind. England was never her home, for she is a black African. Now when she returns to the place which she can rightfully call her home, she is not accepted by her people - like Kwalee and is also rejected by David with whom she can identify herself. Thus, she lives in a double exile.

As a contrast to Ruth, Laurence presents the character of Violet Nedden, the narrator. Like Will Ketteridge, Violet Nedden

accepts the fact that she would always remain an outsider in Africa. Like Matthew, Miss Nedden looks around her with love at the African world and its people. She is the lame English school mistress in the African girl's school named Eburaso Girls School. Very willingly, she accepts her place, the fact which is apparent when she says, "Hilda Povey grows zinnia and nasturtiums, and spends hours trying to coax an exiled rosebush, into bloom, but I will have no English flowers. My garden burns magnificently with jungle lily and poinsettia." (112) Violet Nedden reminds one of the European characters in *This Side Jordan* who fail in their own land and have therefore accepted Africa. Moreover, Violet Nedden she admits this fact openly. This is clear when she tells, "I think I may have come here mainly for myself, after all, hoping to find a place where my light could shine forth". (121)

Being fully aware of what the sense of alienation can mean and how badly it can affect a sensitive mind, Violet Nedden feels very sorry for Ruth and is able to understand her father's position as well. Her openness and also her natural affection for the Africans makes her a very appealing character. In one of the most touching scenes, Violet Nedden and Ruth's father confess to one another the loneliness they have always felt living in a foreign country.

Alienation is also found in the other characters. Dr. Quansah is the obvious stranger, earlier in England and now in his own land. Although he admits it to Violet Nedden that Ruth and his wife were uprooted, from their people due to himself, he realizes that the case is no different with him. This is as he finds out that his African colleagues regard him in a different manner. He is acutely aware of the fact that his wife never liked England and was like a shrub planted in an alien soil which would never grow. He, thus understands Ruth's frustration very well and decides to take her back with him. Aysha, the homeless orphan, the child prostitute, represents the subdued, colonized society where people "had no sense of having been unjustly treated". (115) Yindo, the dogomba boy from the northern desert is another exile who expects no mercy from the strangers in a foreign land. Only Kwalee differs in this respect as she has never experienced alienation and suffering and has never been a stranger in the land of Egypt.

In "A Fetish for Love". Constance (the English woman) learns in a hard way to remain away from those Africans who rigidly believe in their own ways of life. The story portrays the impossibility of any permanent reconciliation between African and European cultures. When Constance objects to being uninformed regarding her maid's reasons for not bearing the child, her doctor replies, "If he had (told you) wouldn't you have wanted to persuade Sunday to consult your ju-ju-man ? (180) Thereby making her realize that the Europeans are supposed to mind their own business. In "The Pure Dimand Man" a new issue is presented. The story is about an African boy taking disadvantage of the, curiosity of an Englishman and trying to get material benefit in the process. He calls this game "Casting Nets For The Diamond Fish Game".

The final story "A Gourdful of Glory" won President's Medel in 1961. It is significantly the story that displays a singing optimism in Ghana's independent future. The story is told through Mammii Ama, a woman representative of everything

positive and hopeful. Right from the beginning we can see that MammiAma is all for independence even though she does not know what it actually means. So when 'Free-dom' actually comes, she feels like an outsider herself for she is made aware of the fact that the buses will not automatically give her free rides; and there can be no sudden transformation to a land where there is honey and milk for everyone. However, MammiiAma does not lose faith and the story ends with :

"Inspired MammiiAma lifted the gourd vessel high above herhead, and it seemed to her that she held not a brittle brown calabash but the world. She held the world in her strong and comforting hands. 'Free-dom he come', she cried, half in exultation half in longing. 'Free-Dom' be here now, dis minute. (242)

Significantly the book also ends with this note of optimism for African future.

A highly remarkable feature of these short stories is that like a thread, there is a single theme which binds them together. It is also the theme which gives the collection a kind of universal touch. This theme is that of self examination in a postcolonial situation through the consciousness of its characters who are confused and sometimes lost in the new world that they attempt to understand with the help of the old colonial world view that their education has trained them in. "Colonial Consciousness", as defined in chapter one, informs their world view mostly. Race, being a constant in this consciousness, defines their identity physically and eventually emotionally. Consequently, the worlds of the colonizer and the colonized divide on the basis of the colour of their skin. A black character, however, westernised, has to come back to live in Africa and a white character however Africanised, can no longer live there after independence. Though both the black and the white characters are dependent on each other, their Prospero Caliban relationship is political and hence not sustainable socially.

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