STRANGE GLIMPSES OF OURSELVES:
LAURENCE'S AFRICAN MIRROR

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ABSTRACT

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The focus of this thesis is on the parallel treatment of native Africans (Somalis and Ghanians) and native Canadians (Métis) in the fiction of Margaret Laurence. While many critics have stressed that Laurence's Canadian background prepared her to write of Africa, few have even mentioned the consistency of her concern for freedom through her depiction of native peoples as symbols of bondage and its release.

This metaphor was suggested to Laurence from the biblical Exodus myth, which lends itself well to both Africa and the Canadian Prairies. A close examination of the religious imagery in Laurence's fiction clarifies these parallels.

Laurence's sense of the psychology of colonization is shown by relating the observations of O. Mannoni (whose influence Laurence acknowledges) and those of Frantz Fanon to Laurence's fictional characters.

Finally, Laurence's work is shown to be part of a growing body of literature by Canadians about Africans or Canadian Indians and Métis. They find, like Laurence, that the strangest glimpses are of themselves, that they are as much the oppressors as the oppressed.

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Chapter 1 Living Away from Home

> The strangest glimpses you may have of any creature in the distant lands will be those you catch of yourself.[1]

Margaret Laurence, perhaps Canada's finest novelist, has given us twelve books. The variety shows the range of her talent; there are five novels, two collections of short stories, a travelogue, a children's story, a criticism of Nigerian contemporary dramatists and novelists, a translation of Somali poems and stories, and most recently, a collection of essays.

Her writing, with the exception of Jason's Quest and some of her essays, may be divided into two parts, the works concerned with Africa, and those set in Canada. However this is to separate the inseparable. The predominant themes of Margaret Laurence are those of exile, oppression, and freedom. I believe that these themes in fact unify all of Laurence's work. In particular, an examination of her treatment of the nature of freedom clarifies the parallels between native Africans (Somalis and Ghanians) and native Canadians (Indians and Métis).

This thesis will show that Laurence uses the same symbols of external victimization throughout her work to depict internal self-exile or the search of each individual

[1] Margaret Laurence, The Prophet's Camel Bell (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1963), p. 1. Further references to the work in this edition will be in the text as PCB, followed by the page number.

for inner freedom. Superficially the novels and stories revolve around situations of bondage. My particular interest is in Laurence's depiction of white Canadians treating the Métis in the same way as the British do the Somalis and Ghanians. Canadians are pictured by Laurence as the original victims of oppression in Scotland and England. When these victims came to Canada, they became the oppressors of the Métis. One difference between the Métis and the Africans is that the Métis have never reached the stage of political independence or neo-colonialism. However, Laurence does show that the Métis strive for individualism in a hostile white environment, a depiction that continues the symbolic use of the external search for freedom begun in her African work. Aware in her youth of the history of the Métis, Laurence saw the struggles for freedom in Africa and reassessed her own people in her fiction. This outer, political search leads us to her main concern for inner freedom for each of us.

The methodology of the thesis is primarily that of close textual analysis revealing theme by focusing on symbols and on characters, which Laurence considers primary. This will unveil her vision of freedom and bondage, the people of the vision, the parallels among the people in it, the psychology behind the vision, and the links to other visionaries. I make some use of cultural and socio-historical material to shed more light on Laurence's work. This includes the writings of O. Mannoni and

Frantz Fanon, as well as African and Métis mythology, and the biographies of such people as Riel, Dumont and Mohamed Abdullah Hassan.

I shall show that Laurence is not working in a vacuum but that other Canadian writers are deeply concerned about these problems and have similar visions.

I stress the African work because I am convinced that the core of Laurence's message took shape there. The Canadian work builds upon it. Although the Métis Tonnerre family appears throughout the Canadian work, the Manawaka books reveal the lives of a limited number of characters. The African works have more range. Of course the Métis in Canada are a minority; in Africa the natives are a majority.

My first chapter defines my concerns and provides biographical information. That Laurence's ancestry and her travels have had a great influence on her work cannot be denied. She has said of her fiction that only A Bird in the House is autobiographical, but her presence and voice are felt throughout her work; as she herself says, "the character is one of the writer's voices and selves, and fiction writers tend to have a mental trunk full of these."[2]

In Chapter Two I shall explore the various definitions of freedom suggested by Laurence in the work set in Africa.

[2] Margaret Laurence, "Time and the Narrative Voice", The Narrative Voice, ed. John Metcalf (Toronto: McGraw-Hill Ryerson, 1972), p. 127.

These include many external examples of bondage and freedom such as the political independence of Ghana, the changing from native religions to Christianity, the transition from tribal ways to individualism. But all of these are outer manifestations of inner bondage and release which is at the core of Laurence's concern. In this chapter I shall also show the way in which Laurence treats the oppression of the Métis in a similar manner in the novels set in Canada. There are many parallels in the two situations; although political independence is not a factor with the Métis, individual freedom is.

Chapter Three analyses Laurence's use of religious imagery and myth in her fiction. Again this provides a vital link in her work because the metaphor of the ancient Israelites is applicable to the alienated Somalis, Ghanians, and Canadian Métis. All these native peoples are nomadic and tribal. All are deeply attached to the land for survival; yet all are wandering; all are oppressed and are seeking release. So too are we all, each from his own cage. This chapter includes a detailed discussion of the apocalyptic and demonic implications of the land upon its inhabitants.

Chapter Four deals with the work of O. Mannoni, with whom Laurence feels great kinship. She has said that she read Prospero and Caliban: The Psychology of Colonization with the shock of recognition. I shall refer briefly to the theory of Frantz Fanon, whose work helps us to understand the relationships between Blacks, Whites, and Métis

in Laurence's work. A thesis by Micere Mugo called "Visions of Africa" explains the stages of freedom in Africa and leads to a better understanding of Laurence's early fiction.

Finally I shall place Laurence's work in the context of other Canadian writers whose fiction deals with native peoples of Africa or Canada. My questions concern the links among Canadians who write of similar problems and portray native people to develop their themes. Are Rudy Wiebe, W.P. Kinsella, Dave Godfrey, and David Knight all talking about freedom, inner freedom? Are these authors all displaced people themselves? Do they all view imperialism in the same way, and are they all religious writers? Is there something specific about being Canadian that unifies them or that makes them able to handle the subject of freedom and oppression?

Laurence's own works recount her journeys to Africa and "the long trek home".[3] She describes her own movement as part of "the struggle of the individual to break free from the destructive influence of his or her past whether religious, family, or environmental."[4] In order to do

[3] Patricia Morley, "The long trek home: Margaret Laurence's Stories", Journal of Canadian Studies (Nov., 1976), passim. Laurence herself speaks of "the long journey home" in the preface to Heart of a Stranger (1976).

[4] Margaret Laurence, quoted in "Laurence of Manitoba", Anon., Canadian Authors and Bookmen, 42 (Winter, 1966), p. 5.

this, Laurence needed to distance herself from Canada and her heritage.

She was born Jean Margaret Wemyss in Neepawa, Manitoba, on July 18, 1926. One critic has remarked upon the strangeness of the emergence from a small town of "a novelist perceptive enough to translate the black man to the white man as she did in her African books".[5] Laurence claims that not only the town itself but the people in it, her ancestors, shaped her vision.[6] She is steeped in her background and in her ancestry. It is a powerful force in her own life and of overwhelming importance in her work.

Peggy Wemyss had a childhood full of love and attention but also one that was overshadowed by the deaths of her mother, Verna, when she was four, and her father when she was nine. Her stepmother, Margaret, who was her mother's sister, brought up Margaret Laurence. A schoolteacher and founder of the town library, Margaret Wemyss encouraged Laurence's creative talents, and the author acknowledges this support in the dedication of <u>This Side Jordan</u>: "To my Mother, Margaret Campbell Wemyss".

Laurence graduated from United College in 1947. She had published several pieces in the college paper there, and was very active in the Winnipeg Old Left, a group that

[5] <u>Ibid</u>., p. 4.

[6] Margaret Laurence, <u>Heart of a Stranger</u> (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1976), p. 15. (Further references, <u>HS</u>).

Clara Thomas describes as being passionately involved in "the brotherhood of man and the urgency for social reform."[7] Hence equality and freedom are not new concerns in the adult Laurence; when she arrived in Africa, she did not suddenly become aware of social injustice. It is a natural course for her writing to follow in her quest for freedom.

At college, Margaret met John Laurence, an older engineering student at the University of Manitoba. They married in 1947 after Margaret's convocation. Laurence worked as a reporter while her husband completed his degree. They went to London in 1949 where she worked in an unemployment agency.[8] But they needed to break away. The opportunity to go to Somaliland presented itself and they set out in 1950. Ostensibly a travelogue, The Prophet's Camel Bell records both the spiritual and physical journey to and through Somaliland.

Although Laurence kept a diary while she was in Somaliland, the book itself was written ten years later in Vancouver, from memories and the diary. As one reads The Prophet's Camel Bell, Laurence's own awakening and growing become apparent. Her inner journey becomes the story; it becomes the metaphor,

While she was in Somaliland, Laurence began to

[7] Clara Thomas, The Manawaka World of Margaret Laurence (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1976), p. 16.

[8] Joan Hind-Smith, Three Voices: The Lives of Margaret Laurence, Gabrielle Roy, and Frederick Philip Grove (Toronto: Clarke, Irwin, 1975), p. 34.

translate Somali poetry, previously an oral tradition only. A work of pure love, it was finally published in 1954 as A Tree for Poverty. Her title acknowledges that literature is a central release, shelter, joy in the Somalis' otherwise harsh existence.

In 1952, the Laurences went on to Ghana, where her husband worked on a new harbour at Tema and Margaret began to write her fiction set in Africa. She was there at a time of rapid transition from old to new values, from colony to nation, from colonialism to neo-colonialism. She was empathetic to the African people in their search for outer, and more important, inner freedom. Always her concern had been social justice and the wandering in search of inner understanding, self-discovery, and knowledge. And in her attempt to see clearly the quest of the African people, she saw herself. In looking into them, she saw reflected those images of herself. From these insights in Africa came This Side Jordan (1960) and The Tomorrow-Tamer (1963). From her deep involvement with and interest in African writers came Long Drums and Canons (1968), a study of contemporary Nigerian writers. Such critics as Clara Thomas, G.D. Killam, and Micere Mugo have compared Laurence's work with that of her African contemporaries who are also writing 'new' literature from an emergent nation.

In 1957, the Laurences returned to Canada and settled in Vancouver with their two children, Jocelyn and David. In 1962 Margaret moved to England with the children, and her hus-

band set off for East Pakistan.[9] They separated. Laurence had to write; doubtless she has had to make personal sacrifices in order to do so. In a sense, however, to have become her own person has allowed her the insight to enter the minds and souls of her characters in a similar search for self-awareness and hence inner joy.

England distanced Laurence from her own background once again, and enabled her to write about it in the Manawaka works: The Stone Angel (1964), A Jest of God (1966), The Fire-Dwellers (1969), A Bird in the House (1970), and The Diviners (1974).

In the same period, while blocked with her work on The Fire-Dwellers, she wrote Jason's Quest, a children's book about a mole. Set in London, it is fascinating and highly amusing to read. As with her entire opus, it juxtaposes old and new values. Perhaps the most significant statement in the book is : "Be patient. When you get home, you may be surprised at what you've learned."[10]

In 1973, Laurence moved back to Canada, this time to Ontario near Peterborough. Earlier, she had been back for summers and as a writer-in-residence at the University of Toronto and at York University. But in 1973 her wilderness

[9]Jocelyn Laurence, Interview in Chatelaine, 49 (June, 1976), p. 92.

[10]Margaret Laurence, Jason's Quest (Toronto: McClellnad and Stewart, 1970), p. 155. (Further references, JQ).

wandering appeared to have ended and she came home. She was writing The Diviners (1974). It is her finest novel to date, and she has said it would be her last. Recently she published Heart of a Stranger (1976), a book of her essays which provides more insight into her work. She is currently at work on a new novel.

Laurence is not an enigma. She writes astutely about her own work; she grants interviews in which she puts her feelings succinctly. She is a deeply, though not traditionally, religious person, as evidenced by the enormous impact of biblical themes and metaphors on her work.

I hope to show that Laurence's own vision is indeed unified, and that her depiction of inner peace and the necessity of coming to terms with the past are universal concerns. The symbols of oppression and freedom within the native peoples form an unchanging pattern towards social justice in her work. Africa showed Laurence Canada, and herself: "One thing I learned, however, was that my experience of other countries probably taught me more about myself and even my own land than it did about anything else. Living away from home gives a new perspective on home" (HS 11). The strangest glimpses.

Chapter II

Freedom is a word our hearts both sing
George Woodcock[11]

Africa released the creative spirit of Margaret Laurence and freedom became her crest badge. She has said that freedom was of prime importance to her African work , that her Canadian writing is of liberation of the spirit and survival, and that she sees one as evolving from the other.[12] This chapter will examine the various aspects of bondage and release described by Laurence in her three main works set in Africa, The Prophet's Camel Bell, This Side Jordan, and The Tomorrow-Tamer.

The most basic application is the political independence of Somaliland and Ghana against which the African writing is set. This transition results in the conflict between old and new religious values, between the ways of the ancestors and technology, and between the tribe and the individual.

Each of Laurence's African books is examined in this chapter solely with respect to its depiction of freedom. It is important as well to discuss the way Laurence has

[11] Quoted in Margaret Laurence, Heart of a Stranger, p. 211. From the poem written by George Woodcock upon the completion of Gabriel Dumont: The Métis Chief and his Lost World.

[12] Margaret Laurence, "Ten Years' Sentences", Writers of the Prairies, ed. Donald Stephens (Vancouver: U.B.C. Press, 1973), p. 142.

handled her message; the symbols, the techniques are impressive. Freedom may be her crest badge, but the badge is finely crafted from Ashanti gold.

The Prophet's Camel Bell is a key to the understanding of Laurence's work because it is an account of her own gradual awareness of Africa; it is the record of her actual first journey to Somaliland, and of her inner journey towards spiritual release. It is also the story of Somaliland as a nation, and of any individual's inner growth.

This Side Jordan is the saga of the expectant birth of freedom of the individual and of Ghana. Close analysis reveals the distorted vision of independence seen by Ghanians and Imperialists alike. Laurence explores every aspect of the birth pangs; although her own vision of inner evolution for the individual is hopeful, she hints at the neo-colonialism which will follow for Ghana. I shall examine the people of her novel and some of the situations and symbols which reveal Laurence's vision.

The Tomorrow-Tamer stories are parables of Laurence's message. Several are discussed in detail as examples of the various types of captivity and release, all of which form a collage of symbols for inner liberation.

Finally I shall show the many parallel situations in the Canadian works which define freedom in similar ways,

and accentuate the closeness between the Somalis, Ghanians, and Métis. Although The Diviners is the major book depicting the Métis, I shall briefly discuss the other Canadian fiction with reference to the Métis and other examples of bondage.

In Heart of a Stranger, Laurence said that "it seemed to me then that if Freedom and Justice ever had any actuality, in any country, there must always be someone there who would place beside the words his own individual question mark" (HS 43). Laurence is that someone.

When she landed in Somaliland, Laurence found an entire country in search of itself. The Somalis were trying to adjust to change. Still colonials, they were servants to the English, who were themselves spiritual exiles. Laurence found it impossible to become a memsahib: "Expatriates still persisted in the belief that the Somalis were of an inferior mentality because they did not speak English as well as the English did" (PCB 41). Laurence's treatment of the imperialists in The Prophet's Camel Bell is filled with irony and she likens them to long-extinct dinosaurs. However much she hated their attitude, she was incapable of being less than compassionate to people who themselves were alienated.

In Somaliland freedom of the individual was nonexistent. As well as being bonded to the English, the Somalis were totally subservient to Allah, submissive to

their own tribes, victimized by the harshness of the land. Although Laurence initially did not understand their passive acceptance, she grew to accept that their faith was quite literally their only salvation. The Somalis believed that all was beyond their control, and so their resentment was lessened.

Hence the Somalis are revealed to us as exiles from their way of life . The English wished to improve the living conditions in Somaliland without regard for the effect of change on the people. Through peace with Allāh, the tremendous drought and the ensuing starvation are acceptable to the Somalis. They distrusted the English as much as they trusted Allāh.

Laurence also shows us the expatriates. Some, like Ernest and Matthew, were genuinely concerned about Africans and risked their lives to help the Somalis. Most, however, considered themselves superior and free to make others servile. They wanted to introduce the ways of Western technology; they wanted the tribe to make way for the individual. Freedom of the individual was a totally new concept to the Somalis, but it was a central issue. The Laurences' servant Mohamed, caught in this transition, felt the need to receive the blessing of his tribe; yet it was too late for total subservience to it. Still his need would always be with him (PCB 173). In the end he attaches himself to a new sort of tribe; he becomes a union leader.

Although outer bonds must definitely be broken first, man is not truly free until he comes to terms with himself. As Laurence said of their servant Abdi, "his truest and most terrible battle, like all men's, was with himself" (PCB 189).

Laurence shows that poetry and tales served the Somalis as a release from their difficult life. The quiet servants then become animated raconteurs, creative and reborn like the desert after the rain.

The use of the Prophet's camel bell as a title and throughout the book becomes very significant. The camel is said to be linked in Persian literature to the serpent in the Garden of Eden, and the ringing of the bell means good luck. The treasured bell, handcrafted from wood, was given to the Laurences as a gift, a symbol of their faith. And the endless plodding of the camel forever parallels that of the people of Somaliland. The prophetic note the bell strikes at the end of the story signals independence and the subsequent injustice and suffering.

On the simplest level, Laurence's novel set in Africa is the story of the birth of Ghana. Henry Kreisel wrote that with this political birth came the death "not only of European dominance but also the death of the tribal world."[13] The problem for most Ghanians, as for Somalis, was that they were suspended between the family of the tribe and indivi-

[13] Henry Kreisel, "The African Stories of Margaret Laurence", The Canadian Forum (April, 1961), p. 9.

dualism. Laurence wrote of Achebe that his work deals with "the clash between generations, the social and individual disturbances brought about by a period of transition, the slow dying of the destructive aspects of tribalism, the anguish and inadequacy of uncompromising individualism as an alternative to tribalism."[14] Laurence deals with this problem too. Hence she shows that with freedom from England should come release from the old tribal ways, from being part of a mass to being an individual, from outer to inner freedom.

Nathaniel Amegbe, the African teacher in <u>This Side Jordan</u>, is shown initially as a follower of the Africanization policy, as a believer that all will be well when Ghana rises again and there is individual freedom. Victor Edusei, the Black journalist, is the prophet, realizing that neo-colonialism will be far worse than colonialism. The book oscillates between the freedom of the ancestral way of life and the expected new release of independence.

Nathaniel is a classic example of a suspended individual, caught between the urgent request by his tribe to return to them upon the death of his father, and the equally strong urge to follow the path begun by his father by educating him at a mission school. Nathaniel

[14] Margaret Laurence, <u>Long Drums and Canons</u> (London: Macmillan, 1968), p. 9. (Further references, <u>LDC</u>).

makes us realize how much more difficult it is to be an individual.

He knows that he must come to terms with his tribal past, but not without tremendous inner torture. Although we never hear his father, his wife Aya represents the past and her voice is the voice of their ancestors. Like Mohamed in The Prophet's Camel Bell, Nathaniel must go back to his ancestors in his mind; he fears the teachings of Christianity and also those of the High Life. He fears the old drumbeat and also the new, and that is his advantage. He realizes that neither is perfect, that his peace of mind depends on his ability to do his best to come to terms with the old as well as the new by merging with both. The birth of Joshua is the symbolic result, the birth of inner acceptance of the old and armed with this, a striving towards the new. Nathaniel is able to see both the confining and protective sides of the bondage of the ancestors: "The new roots may not grow straight, but they have grown too strong to be cut away. It is the dead who must die. . . My God is the God of my own soul." [15]

In This Side Jordan, Laurence defines outer freedom as release from colonialism. Inwardly it is the unleashing of the individual from the tribe, and a coming to terms with the past and oneself. Nathaniel asks, "what could gain him release from the prison of himself?" (TSJ 227).

[15]Margaret Laurence, This Side Jordan (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1970), p. 274. (Further references, TSJ).

But Laurence also deals with the exiled imperialists, in their spiritual cages. Outer bondage for them is the prison of Africa, the knowledge that they cannot return to their homeland; their inner torture is their frustration that leads them to act superior to the natives. Johnnie Kestoe has been trampled on in England and so he finds vengeance in superiority over the Africans. Cunningham is imprisoned in alcohol, Helen in neuroses, Cora in sterility. Africa to them is horrible, terrifying, or at most a curiosity as it is to the white liberal, Miranda Kestoe. Laurence lets us see that although we may think the imperialists in a colonial situation are free, they are inwardly alienated as much or more than the victims.

The structure of This Side Jordan has been criticized as being too pat because of the parallel depiction of Black and White characters. Laurence is saying that there are more parallels than we realize. The novel was rewritten to delete much of Nathaniel's inner monologue. I think that the climax of the monologue, where the Christian and African symbols merge, is the strongest part of the book:

> King Jesus came riding, all in gold, and the brown skin of His body was afire with the dust of gold. Gold is the sun, gold is the King . . . . Sasabonsam, you lie. I will not be cursed. I am on the side of the King (TSJ 77).

The African stories of The Tomorrow-Tamer are parables, by definition short narratives which teach through analogy. George Woodcock has objected to the didactic

intent of The Tomorrow-Tamer.[16] However Laurence is passionate about her vision and her message is not superior to her talent.

Various suggestions about freedom are stated outright in the stories and there is no mistaking the theme:

> Independence is the new fetish and political parties are the new chieftains.
> ("Drummer of all the World")[17]

> Salvation is like the loaves and fishes . . . enough for everyone.
> (from the ironic "The Merchant of Heaven", T-T 56).

> There is more to freedom than not living in a box and You would not think so if you had ever lived in a box.
> ("Godman's Master", T-T 155).

But beyond this overt message is implied spiritual freedom. And beyond that is Laurence's own journey and her strange glimpses of herself which compel her to handle her message so perfectly.

"Drummer of All the World" is strategically placed first in the collection of African stories. It includes most of the nuances of Laurence's basic definition of freedom: salvation, the independence of Ghana, the transition to technology, and a coming to terms with self.

Matthew, the white protagonist, is the son of a

[16] George Woodcock, "Jungle and Prairie", Canadian Literature, 45 (Summer, 1970), p. 83.

[17] Margaret Laurence, The Tomorrow-Tamer (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1970), p. 17. (Further references, T-T).

missionary who hated the Africans although he tried to tame them. His idea was not so much to improve their lives within their own framework as to completely change the frame without any concern for the individual. "For twenty years he tried to force, frighten or cajole his flock away from drumming and dancing, the accompaniments of the old religion" (T-T 4). He failed to understand that "they could no more stop themselves from dancing than they could from breathing" (T-T 6).

Matthew is brought up by an African woman, along with Yaa's own son Kwabena, born the same year. This is central to the story. Because his foster-mother is African, Matthew feels at home in Africa rather than in England. But he will be the most alienated when he loses his job to an African because of independence. And Kwabena (symbolically Africa) rejects him, as does Afua, Yaa's niece to whom Matthew is physically attracted. For them the person of Matthew recedes; only the symbol of England and imperialism remains. And this Africans reject totally.

In the second part of the story is the time symbol to represent technology, with references to clocks, to "a time of illusion" and "the time was now past". Kwabena looks "elaborately at his watch". The symbols of new freedom are trade unions, highlife music and the newspapers. But this is not true freedom.

Kwabena, who wanted to be a fetish priest, becomes instead a medical orderly while hoping to become a doctor. Technology overrides the old order. Laurence's technique is often in ironic inversals. In this case, Matthew moves from a Christian childhood towards fetish priests while Kwabena moves away from traditional Africa. Yaa becomes a symbol of the mother country but she never rejects Matthew; she dies, refusing technology and the new way.

In the end, Matthew comes to terms with his own feelings about Africa and talks about inner freedom: "one man cannot find it for another man, and one land cannot bring it to another" (T-T 18).

"The Perfume Sea" is a clever, comic interpretation of the situation resulting from the independence of Ghana. "Didn't you know," says the British customer in the beauty salon, "that this colony will be self-governing soon? They don't want us here any more" (T-T 29).

The symbol of hair and hair-dressing recurs often in Laurence's work. In this case the reversals of hair-curling and then hair-straightening equipment suggest the wild natural African and the tame orderly English. Mrs. Webley-Pryce wanted her hair curled; the African, Mercy, wants hers straightened. The irony is that Mercy seeks to become a white woman with straight hair.

The cage and bird imagery throughout the story

re-emphasize the desire for release from bondage. The uncaged parrots kept by Dorée, the exiled hair dresser, always return to eat because they do not know how to find food. This is the perfect analogy for the newly independent African, so long subservient he does not know how to deal with freedom. There needs to be an adjustment, a total shifting of roles by servants towards being free individuals, not by copying the old masters with white face-powder but through independence and dignity.

At the end of the story, Dorée's "eau d'exile" perfume is a purifier. There is the hope of rebirth not only for Dorée (golden) and Archipelago (a sea with many islands), but metaphorically for Ghana.

In her discussion of Laurence's stories, Patricia Morley reminds us that "alienation and exile are seen as forms of bondage or psychic slavery."[18] This relates most obviously to Laurence's metaphor of the Israelites in bondage which is discussed at length in my third chapter. However, exile is variously defined by Laurence in her African work. The words "exile" and "stranger" recur consistently, but are not quite interchangeable.

The most basic meaning of exile is separation from one's native country (England most often), thereby

[18] Patricia Morley, "The long trek home: Margaret Laurence's Stories", p. 19.

making one a stranger in a strange land. There is, then, the loneliness of being an alien or expatriate. Laurence has been able to capture this sense of exile beautifully in people like Violet Nedden, the English teacher in "The Rain Child". She is a stranger in Africa, but having remained there for twenty-two years, she has become acclimatized and has reacted against her orderly English background enough to understand African ways, symbolized by her refusal to cultivate an English garden. Now the reversal comes through. Unlike the English women in The Prophet's Camel Bell and This Side Jordan, Violet is more bound to Africa than to England, and she says: "sitting in my garden and looking at the sun on the prickly pear and the poinsettia I think of that island of grey rain where I must go as a stranger, when the time comes, while others must remain as strangers here" (T-T 133). Her African garden is unchecked fertility; England will mean exile and tears to her. The last reference to strangers is to Ruth, the black "rain child". Ruth is for all intents and purposes English, a stranger in her own land which is strange to her. Just as Violet will be a stranger in England, so Ruth is in Africa.

But Laurence plays with this theme of exile so that it becomes a feeling rather than a fact, so that one can be exiled from oneself or so that one portion of self becomes a stranger to the other part. This is true of the child in "Mask of Beaten Gold", a tremendously powerful story

which deals with racial intermarriage.[19] The exile that results is Jeremy, alienated from everyone around him except the chameleon; he neither knows nor understands the parts of himself. Like the chameleon, he does not know his true self or colour. It is interesting that Laurence did not include this story in The Tomorrow-Tamer collection although it was published the same year. It is a more complex story than Ruth's; it is perhaps a precursor to the relationship between Morag and Jules, the Métis hero of The Diviners. But the progression from Jeremy to Pique is a complete turnaround: Jeremy dies; he literally burns up of fever. The only hope expressed, and this is fearful, is that Candace, his black mother, and Philip can still communicate. But Pique lives and is able to come to an inner peace by assimilating her dual heritage. Whereas Jeremy dies alienated from both cultures, Pique lives, having assimilated her past.

"Godman's Master" has been described as Laurence's most successful story, perhaps because it is so multi-dimensional. Henry Kreisel has said it is about "the birth of a personality, and with the trials and tribulations which the naked creature has to undergo before it emerges, however tentatively, however gropingly as a human being,

[19]Margaret Laurence, "Mask of Beaten Gold", The Tamarack Review, 29 (Autumn, 1963), p. 3-21.

as a god-man."[20] It is indeed the story of one man, of the release from bondage and the search for inner freedom; but it is also a parable of civilization, or of Ghana. In the period of transition from tribalism to individualism, this story is a form of political or Swiftian parody. There is rebirth imagery, including the umbilical cord which can kill or transfer life.

Godman is the most visibly bound character in Laurence's fiction. He is shown freed of his box, reborn, freed of the umbilical cord; he tries to escape the meaning of his ancestors by living with Moses. In the end, however, he faces reality; he is part of his tradition. In all the despair he has known, he has hope; he plays his role as a jester.

Similarly, all of Laurence's characters must eventually come to an acceptance of life as it is; it is the human condition, a type of existentialism. Life is absurd in that we are not entirely free. We must accept that fact and make our lives meaningful in spite of it. Said Laurence, "no one ever makes it in a perfect sense. We always have to carry along the baggage of the past."[21]

She has said of African writers that they write

[20] Henry Kreisel, "The African Stories", p. 9.

[21] Margaret Laurence, in Valerie Miner, "The Matriarch of Manawaka", Saturday Night (May, 1974), p. 19.

of their past "in order to recover a sense of themselves, an identity and a feeling of value from which they were separated by two or three generations of colonialism and missionizing. They have found it necessary, in other words, to come to terms with their ancestors and their gods in order to be able to accept the past and be at peace with the dead, without being stifled or threatened by that past" (HS 14):

Hence in Laurence's fiction ancestors are seen as both protective and confining or imprisoning, as Nathaniel realizes in This Side Jordan. This feeling of dualism about ancestors is very clear in the African stories as well.

In the parable of "The Tomorrow-Tamer", Kofi is the representative of his tribe chosen to tackle or tame the modern monster, technology. He is a Joshua; he sets out not only with the blessing of his elders and ancestors, but also after a discussion with his old grandmother. It is interesting that Laurence is very careful to mention the grandmother again as the change comes in Kofi and as he disregards the ancestors on whose graves he initially pours palm oil, assuring himself of their blessing. Now Kofi thinks that since nothing untoward has happened as a result of the bridge, he is free of his ancestors. He has not understood; he has only broken away from the past. Instead of assimilating the old spirits and realizing the

truths behind the wisdom, Kofi rejects the past, and power and freedom become synonymous to him.

Laurence suggests that the past has been shelved, that, like Kofi, we have not come to an understanding. We have neglected our culture in favour of the New World. "The Pure Diamond Man" is a clever parody of the view that the past is anthropological curiosity. Hardacre, of a British diamond mining family, is interested in old Africa; he tells Tetteh, the Highlife African, that the latter is "selling his birthright for a mess of gramophone records" (T-T 186). We are all selling out to technological advances, but technology is not freedom either.

"A Gourdful of Glory" is said to be one of Laurence's weakest stories. Placed at the end of the book, it does show clearly what the entire collection of stories suggests. Freedom is not something that descends suddenly; it has to be discovered within. Mammii Ama realizes that flag-waving is not enough.

> She nevah be shame, she no fear for nothing.
> D'time wey come now, like queen she shine.
> (T-T 244)

She becomes the symbol of Black Freedom, a tree to shelter her people.

With the beginning of her Canadian work, Laurence became more interested in individual survival and freedom of the spirit than in the symbol of

political independence. Yet all of the Manawaka books center on colonial situations of bondage from the relationship between Hagar and Bram, and Hagar and herself in The Stone Angel, to the more symbolic ties between Morag and Jules in The Diviners. The latter novel, in which Laurence moves closest to her African work, uses the Métis as symbols of bondage. However, there are many parallels between the African and Canadian works in general.

In The Stone Angel, Hagar discusses the independence of Canada from Britain. She curses her father for having forsaken Scotland and "sired us here . . . in the sweltering summers and winters that froze the wells and the blood."[22] Later we see that Hagar belittles the "half-breed" girls who are useful only for sex and housework. She admonishes her son John to stay away from the Tonnerres: "I wouldn't have trusted any of them as far as I could spit" (SA 127). This is exactly the attitude of the Memsahibs in The Prophet's Camel Bell and of Helen Cunningham in This Side Jordan.

Hagar spends her life negating freedom or inner joy. She is imprisoned by her father, by Bram's life, by Mr. Oatley her employer, and finally by her body in its death throes. This last is the key; she is

[22] Margaret Laurence, The Stone Angel (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1968), p. 15. Further reference, SA).

imprisoned by her SELF. She is in bondage to her own pride. When she realizes this, she attains the joy she wished for so long: "I must always, always have wanted that - simply to rejoice . . . 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" (SA 292).

Of Laurence's Canadian characters, Rachael Cameron is the most psychologically interesting of the self-exiled or sectionally alienated. Rachael knows Rachael the teacher, the tame, the organized, the bound very well; Rachael the passionate, the joyful is unknown, a stranger to herself.

Rachael talks about her sense of inner freedom at the end of A Jest of God. She has been caged from others and from herself. Calla and the Spiritualist Church, Nick and Vancouver are her tickets to freedom. These all symbolize release. In the end, the release must come from within her. She says,

> I will be different; I will remain the same. I will still go parchment-faced with embarrassment and clench my pencil . . . I will be afraid. Sometimes I will feel light-hearted, sometimes light-headed. I may sing aloud even in the dark. I will ask myself if I am going mad, but if I do, I won't know it.[23]

[23] Margaret Laurence, A Jest of God (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1974), p. 202. (Further references, JG).

But now she knows herself, and this is the birth of Rachael the free: "Make me to hear joy and gladness, that the bones which Thou hast broken may rejoice" (JG 201).

Rachael is connected in many ways to the English teacher Violet Nedden in "The Rain Child". And yet Miss Nedden is released in Africa; her joy is there. Rachael is closer to Nathaniel in This Side Jordan, who at the end self-consciously finds his peace, a coming to terms with ancestors and missions.

Rachael suffers outer bondage as well. She is in a master-slave situation with her ever-demanding mother. Calla symbolizes the possibility of spiritual joy while Nick is pure physical freedom. Rachael's awakening is to literally bear death (a tumour rather than a baby). Once freed she becomes the master ("I am the mother now" JG 184) though not without trepidation.

The Fire-Dwellers is again about a colonial situation, the maligned housewife. Written with a tremendous feeling for comic happenings, it is perhaps Laurence's wittiest book. Yet superimposed are terrifying incidents which haunt Stacey as she goes about her humdrum existence.

The problem of exile includes that of communication, the breakdown of which puts us into exile within ourselves and without. This thread runs throughout the African and Manwaka works, where in current jargon, people are either

not on the same wave length or have a short circuit within themselves. It is best symbolized in two-year-old Jen in The Fire-Dwellers who does not communicate at all until her parents are able to open up to each other. This is Laurence's final hope, expressed in Heart of a Stranger, "in the end some human warmth and ability to reach out and touch others" (HS 17).

Stacey and Mac are unable to communicate except sexually, and that not often. They are exiled from each other. Stacey is also alienated from Manawaka; she feels imprisoned in the city. As well, she is a stranger to part of her total self. This is shown in her constant concern with her body, in such releases as her fantasies, her deciding to dance all one afternoon, her search for self in alcohol, her affair with Luke, her search for a physical explanation from a doctor. At the end of the novel, Stacey realizes the answer is within herself, and having come to that realization, she can reach out to Mac, who also starts to make his peace with himself. Matthew, Mac's father, represents the ancestors, as does Mrs. Cameron (whose arrival is anticipated). Stacey has come to terms. All of us like Stacey, Rachael, and Hagar have some sort of alienation in our lives; the only defence is to accept it, to know ourselves and hence find inner freedom.

Many definitions of outer bondage and freedom which we found in the African writing recur in The Fire-Dwellers.

Luke, Stacey's lover, writes an outline of a science fiction story about Greyfolk. They lived a fine free life until they were virtually exterminated by their African conquerors:

> They'd evolved over the years into wizened grey-scaled folk who lived on sand lizards and water from dew ponds. They'd lost their language and all knowledge of their past, although they had a few dim racial memories and some bizarre quasi-religious cults. [24]

Substitute Métis, or half-breed, and the story becomes a tremendously ironic comment on imperialism. Interestingly the Africans are shown as imperialists of the Greyfolk. This is used to parallel Canadians who have been both the victims of imperialism and the enforcers of it.

Luke comments on Northern Indians as victims:

> lots of people visit the place every summer, for maybe half an hour. The attraction is the totems. And there they are - high, thin, beaked, bleached in the sun, cracking and splintering, the totems of the dead. And of the living dead. If I were one of them, the nominally living, I'd sure as hell hate people coming in from the outside . . . You don't ask anybody anything. You haven't suffered enough. You don't know what they know. You don't have the right to pry. So you look, and then you go away. (F-D 227)

There is a similar treatment of the Highlanders in the essay "Road from the Isles." Laurence describes the

[24] Margaret Laurence, The Fire-Dwellers (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1973), p. 200. (Further references, F-D).

tartan dolly trade: "I have the feeling," said Laurence, "that the Highlander of today is in somewhat the same position as the North American Indian . . . . The Dance of the Ancestors - slicked up, petrified, and performed forever in the same way" (HS 155).This is the way the Englishman Hardacre in "The Pure Diamond Man" wanted Africa to remain.

The stories of A Bird in the House abound with images of cages and release from them. Differently structured from their African counterparts, these stories form a loose novel in that each recounts some aspect of Vanessa's youth.

Grandfather Connor's brick house, the central unifying image, becomes both a prison and shelter to Vanessa. At the end of the collection, she returns to the old house which has been sold. It upsets her that it is in disrepair, but she realizes that this is not the mark of her ancestors because the physical thing is no longer hers. What is important is that "he proclaimed himself in my veins".[25] She passes on to her own children not the symbolic house but the message. This reminds us of Nathaniel in This Side Jordan where he says that maybe his father knew that Jordan would have to be

[25] Margaret Laurence, A Bird in the House (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1974), p. 207. (Further references, BH).

crossed, and that Joshua, Nathaniel's son, would do it. Nathaniel and Vanessa come to terms.

A bird in the house means a death in the house. Caging is dying. Grandmother Connor has a canary who is caged and often mute, like Piquette Tonnerre who wants to be free as the loons but who is caged by her infirmity and her Métis background in a white world. Grandmother said of the canary that "it had been there always and wouldn't know what to do with itself outside" (BH 6). This is like Dorée's parrots in "The Perfume Sea," and like all the imprisoned.

With The Diviners Laurence moved full-circle. As Valerie Miner writes: "in one sense, The Diviners is a cultural catharsis. Morag's personal alienation parallels the broader dispossession of the Scots and the Métis . . . she achieves symbolic absolution in the love between Morag Gunn and Jules Tonnerre. Their relationship mitigates the alienation of the two peoples. Their daughter Piquette Tonnerre Gunn, represents a resolution of conscience, a new generation."[26]

Most of the memories or hopes in The Diviners are in the form of wishful thinking or tales. Christie Logan, Morag's adopted father, tells of the Highlanders as a

[26] Valerie Miner, "The Matriarch of Manawaka", p. 19.

displaced group who courageously settled the Prairies; Rider Tonnerre's tales recount the attempts of the Métis to keep their land. Hence from a political form of bondage in Africa to that of the Métis in Canada, the symbolism of The Diviners parallels This Side Jordan and The Tomorrow-Tamer stories.

There are also parallels between the African spirits and those of the Métis. In both cases Laurence shows that man and nature are inextricably linked. In The Diviners Morag thinks about pathetic fallacy: "Not that clouds or that would have HUMAN feelings, but that trees and rivers and even this bridge might have their own spirits."[27] This reminds us of Kofi and his silver bridge in "The Tomorrow-Tamer".

Technology has alienated the native people from their land. In The Diviners, Piquette is a stranger in a strange land when she first goes to Manawaka. Later she will join her people in Galloping Mountain, in their "living place".

Jules' songs and tales remind us not only of the poetry and stories of the Somalis, but also of the inner workings of Nathaniel's mind and of Mammii Ama's song

[27] Margaret Laurence, The Diviners (Toronto: Bantam, 1975), p. 126. (Further references, TD).

at the end of "A Gourdful of Glory":

> They say the dead don't always die,
> They say the truth outlives the lie -
> The night wind calls their voices there,
> The Métis men, like Jules Tonnerre.
> (TD 459)

Consider, too, the similarity in the endings of This Side Jordan and The Diviners. Nathaniel is standing outside his house holding his small son. As he looks out he sees many dark symbols, but "beyond the city, the plains. And beyond the plains, the forest . . ." (TSJ 281). He names his son Joshua and enters his house.

In The Diviners, Morag also stands outside her house having bade farewell to her daughter. She too sees demonic symbols, but "only slightly further out, the water deepened and kept its life from sight" (TD 453). Morag returns to her house to name her new book.

I have said that all of Laurence's characters are moving towards this end - joy, inner freedom, peace - whatever word we use. Her works, whether stories or novels, are constructed around the individual(s) seeking this freedom, with the use of a collage of other characters and symbols to reinforce the ideas of bondage and release. It is not that Laurence uses her characters simply as symbols, but that certain people embody by

their very existence an obvious bondage.[28]

Laurence has structured her novels to emphasize this idea of the struggle for inner freedom. As I have mentioned, she has been criticized for the too obvious parallels in This Side Jordan, and for the inner monologues. In my opinion, the conflicts and inner torture of Nathaniel are well brought out. Rachael's monologue is again the only way in which to envisage her psychological exile and horror in A Jest of God. Similarly the switchings in Stacey's mind from present to fantasy to past point up the inner confusion and emotional breakdown, the terror of her mind. Hagar's story is unmatched for the tremendous perception of the search of her whole memory to find the joy so missing from her life.

Laurence has said that the form of each of her novels and stories was determined by the sort of character portrayed.[29] She worries about form, and does a great deal of rewriting. But I think that the success of her work lies in her ability to get inside her characters, letting us see the workings of their inner selves through the form of the fiction. Many critics have found fault

[28]Margaret Laurence, "Ivory Tower or Grassroots?: The Novelist as Socio- Political Being," A Political Art, ed. William H. New (Vancouver: U.B.C. Press, 1978), p. 25: "Social justice must sometimes be defined in fiction by the lack of it."

[29]Graeme Gibson, Eleven Canadian Novelists (Toronto: Anansi, 1973), p. 189 ff.

with Laurence's sub-titles and "memory-bank movie" flashes in The Diviners. Again, I think the deliberate and meaningful titles remind us over and over that this is the struggle of Morag Gunn to find herself, to accept her past, her ancestors, her life as it is. There is always this struggle in Laurence's works. Life is not easy; in the end, there is joy but we must rage against the night in order to find it.

Chapter 111

Bread hath he, but a man is weak in exile.[30]

And I am come down to deliver them out of the hand of the Egyptians, and to bring them up out of that land unto a good land and a large, unto a land flowing with milk and honey.

Exodus 3: 8

No influence is more strongly felt in Laurence's work than the Bible. At the outset of her journey into the desert of Somaliland, she read the five books of Moses for the first time. No story could more perfectly have pointed her way. For the Israelites and the Somalis, the Imperialists and Laurence herself were all in exile, were all wandering in search of the Promised Land. On a personal level the individual's quest is a coming to terms with self; it is a journey towards self-awareness. Laurence has said that she "wanted to show the process - the long gradual process of self-knowledge, a process which never ends and which for me began in Africa, for it was really Africa which taught me to look at myself."[31]

[30] Euripides, "The Electra", quoted by Margaret Laurence in an epigraph for a poem written as an undergraduate. It is interesting that both of her undergraduate published stories ("Calliope" and "Tal des Walde") also deal with exiles, aliens. Hence exile and bondage are not recent ideas for Laurence.

[31] Margaret Laurence, quoted in Micere Mugo, "Visions of Africa in the Fiction of Chinua Achebe, Margaret Laurence, Elspeth Huxley, and Ngugi Wa Thiong'O", PhD Thesis, University of New Brunswick, 1973, p. 20; from an unpub. article by Margaret Laurence, "Half War/Half Peace" (1969), p. 5.

In this chapter, I shall discuss the various uses of the Bible made by Laurence in her work. There are essentially four main applications of biblical imagery, the most powerful being archetypal myth. Another is the investing of characters with names and namesakes of the Bible other than the archetypes. A third is the reference to a specific event or place which touches off a host of implications in the reader's mind. Last is Christian symbolism. I shall describe each of these categories and show examples from Laurence's novels and stories. Just as the search for freedom unifies her books set in Africa and those based in Canada, so too biblical myth correlates all Laurence's work. Africa was the beginning, particularly in the way in which the Somalis reflected the metaphor of the Israelites. The Bible as the central reference point is then a key to a wider understanding of the implications of bondage and release suggested by Laurence.

The basic story of the Israelites' exile from their own land awakened Laurence to the parallel alienations of native Africans and of Canadian Indians and Métis. Hence this chapter includes a discussion of similarities of exile, of tribal wanderings, and of the demonic and apocalyptic implications of the land. For the land is essential to the people; it is also essential to Laurence.

Northrop Frye summarizes the use of recurring myth

in literature and makes sense of all the permutations of it.[32] Laurence has never read Anatomy of Criticism and does not intend to do so until she finishes writing. She has the artist's instinct for archetypal myth, and her possibly unconscious use of it attests to its universality.[33]

According to Frye there are two concentric quest myths in the Bible, a genesis-apocalyptic myth where Adam is cast out of Eden and loses both the river and the tree of life. And there is the parallel exodus-millenium myth, where Israel is cast out of his inheritance and wanders in the wilderness in search of the Promised Land. Eden and the Promised Land are analogues. Hence there is the journey and the quest.[34]

The sea plays a most important part in the Bible and includes the Flood, a symbol of birth, but also of death. Christ is related to water for He commands the sea and His apostles are fishermen. Rain also becomes imprisoned water because all water is engorged by Leviathan.

The main overriding myth is of birth-death-rebirth.

[32] Northrop Frye, Anatomy of Criticism: Four Essays (Princeton: Princeton U. Press, 1973), passim.

[33] Patricia Morley, in a conversation with the author of this thesis, from a discussion with Margaret Laurence, July 1976. See also Kroetsch, Creation (Toronto: New Press, 1970), p. 56, 58: "Good Lord, I didn't know it was there!"

[34] Northrop Frye, Anatomy of Criticism, p. 191.

And the Bible is the main source of apocalyptic and demonic imagery for Western literature. Apocalyptic means desirable: a garden, a lamb, a city (the new Jerusalem). Christ (as anagogic metaphor) unites all these. Demonic, on the other hand, is painful or repulsive imagery: the animals are monsters (dragons, serpents), there is a sinister forest or barren land, and the cities are of destruction.

Between the apocalyptic and the demonic Frye notes five other less dramatic levels. There is the hero and the enemy. The hero obviously has apocalyptic qualities and the enemy, demonic (Egypt, bondage, oppression). Frye points out that Joshua, the hope of the Old Testament, is the same as Jesus.[35] Laurence's writing includes both apocalyptic and demonic imagery, with freedom opposed to bondage. The religious imagery reflects her opinion of natives and imperialists. Only imperialists whose vision is like Laurence's are depicted in desirable images.

Frank Pesando maintains that Laurence's biblical imagery is "almost entirely from two sections of the Bible: Genesis and the Revelation of Saint John the Divine."[36] I would argue that it is from the Pentateuch rather than

[35] Loc. cit.

[36] Frank Pesando, "In a Nameless Land: The Use of Apocalyptic Mythology in the Writings of Margaret Laurence", Journal of Canadian Fiction, 2,1 (Winter, 1973), p. 54.

from Genesis alone. Pesando continues, "this linking of birth and death mythology is particularly evident in Margaret Laurence's use of the sea."[37] All of this is clarified by Frye's general theory. Pesando reminds us that Johnnie Kestoe walks by the sea near the end of _This Side Jordan_, and Archipelago and Dorée end up by the sea in "The Perfume Sea". This continues into the Canadian books with Hagar, Stacey, and Rachael ending up in Vancouver by the Pacific, and Morag by her river in Ontario. Even Aunt Edna moves to Nova Scotia in _A Bird in the House_, all with a sense of rebirth, hope.

But the sea can also be demonic, with images of decay. Again Pesando reminds us that the sea of glass in Revelation is "a reservoir of evil"[38] and that it loses its salt only when the New Jerusalem appears. The sea of glass is the birth place of dragons.

The apocalyptic and demonic connotations of the sea in Laurence's African work may be seen in "Drummer of all the World." Matthew, more a native than an imperialist, is born "on Africa's salt-steaming west coast" (_T-T_ 1). His bath contains lizards and he swims with Kwabena in the forbidden lagoon rather than in the clean permitted sea. But they play on the seashore "with its twisted seashells and moss-hair rock and stretches of pale sand

[37] _Loc. Cit._

[38] _Loc. Cit._

where transparent crabs scurried . . . " (T-T 8). The sea is desirable in that Matthew makes love to Afua there, but as a master. Though she marries a fisherman, a Christian, life-giving symbol, Afua possesses death death with flies and latrine smells. As Matthew is forced to leave Africa, he thinks of the surf as "long white fingers" clutching the brown land, as strangling as the white people (T-T 19).

"The Merchant of Heaven", another African story, opens with "black-and-orange dragon lizards . . . the heat shimmers like molten glass" (T-T 50). This entire story is heavily infused with apocalyptic imagery and religious significance. In this case, Laurence literally drenches the story in irony and sarcasm. It is made comic because of the double meanings: "Brother Lemon was clad in a dove-grey suit of miraculously immaculate material" (T-T 50). He is like the pale horseman of the Apocalypse, the one who represents Death and Hell. Danso, the African artist, is a chameleon, a snake with viper marks, his masked eyes "dark as sea" (T-T 68). Yet he is a leopard, a symbol associated with passion and Christ. The people who come to hear Brother Lemon are like sandcrabs.

The contrasting apocalyptic and demonic visions of the Bible and the two concentric biblical myths are also apparent in This Side Jordan. Nathaniel is cast

out of Eden, his forest home, only to see the New Jerusalem is a vision or epiphany at the novel's end: "and beyond the forest, the desert . . . Shall we call him Joshua?" (TSJ 281). But at the same time, this is the myth of the whole of the Ghanian people, alienated from their land by the imperialists, and in search of independence.

Nathaniel is born near a river and in childhood swims "like a little lithe fish" in a green pool (TSJ 74). Now however, Nathaniel is surrounded not by the pastoral and apocalyptic symbols, but by the decaying school which "sagged, buckled, rotted and decayed . . . like an old unburied corpse" (TSJ 16). At the end of the book, Nathaniel is in the city, but it is not one of destruction; it is "like a giant fisherman" (TSJ 281), and there is the promise of crossing the apocalyptic river. It is a rebirth.

Johnnie Kestoe, Nathaniel's white counterpart, is depicted in reverse. He is born around the gutter, initiated through bloodshed (an equivalent for water) by a Jamaican. At the end of the story, Johnnie is reborn through the bloodshed of his daughter's birth. Note the difference in the way in which the treatment of the native and of the imperialist is handled.

The Canadian-set books show a similar distinction between whites and natives. In The Stone Angel, for

example, Hagar is initially repressed, and is released through her association with Bram. Although his mansion is disorderly, run-down and demonic, he is an Indian type, "a bearded Indian" (SA 45). Realizing life with Bram is a new imprisonment, Hagar leaves and goes to Vancouver, by the sea; however she is part of the city and is in bondage to Mr. Oatley. Only when she goes to the cannery at the end of the book are there apocalyptic associations of rebirth. It is an interesting continuation from the African works, where the natives are seen mostly in apocalyptic terms. An exception is Afua in "Drummer of all the World," as discussed above.

The whites in Africa are seen as pale, ~~imprisoned~~, hating the jungle, in terror of the snakes and scorpions, and trying desperately to tame the land and the people. In The Diviners, Jules Tonnerre lives in a shanty in the valley; he is associated with wine-drinking and utter freedom. He is repressed by a white family and by the army. His release is through his songs and Morag, and later through his daughter, Pique. He lives in a green valley, but it contains decadence and is near the cemetery. Hence there is death there as well as freedom. . Perhaps, in fact, the Indian does represent as Doug Jones says, "the divided mind",[39]

[39] D. G. Jones, Butterfly on Rock (Toronto: U. of T. Press, 1970), p. 43.

somewhere between culture and joy, between bondage and freedom. In other words the Indian is intrinsically free, but repressed by alienation from his land and by being considered inferior by whites. Hence Africans and Indian/Métis are treated in the same way in Laurence's fiction.

Linked to the biblical pendulum which moves between God and the devil is the symbol of the mask. Sandra Djwa speaks of false gods and false fronts. The first example Djwa gives is of Brother Lemon, who is apparently an evangelist or apostle, but who is really a sorcerer. Djwa says that Laurence uses the false gods like a facade on a building.[40] As I see it, there are two ways of seeing false gods in Laurence's work: first as not being actually godlike and second, as being a front or mask. Both ideas are very important to an understanding of Laurence's symbol.

False gods were set up by some imperialist missionaries, who did not impart truth or grace, joy or freedom, but fear, distorted truth or a new "ju ju". False also were the fetishes of the old religion, the charms and offerings which were supposed to have magical effects. Laurence shows this well in her stories "A Fetish for

[40] Sandra Djwa, "False Gods and the True Covenant: Thematic Continuity Between Margaret Laurence and Sinclair Ross". Journal of Canadian Fiction, 1,4 (Fall, 1972), passim.

Love" and "The Pure Diamond Man". It is in the saga of Godman. According to Djwa, Moses is the false god (master) in this story, and so he is, masked by his blurred glasses. But Godman himself is seen as a false front, as Faru's oracle. In "The Tomorrow-Tamer", Kofi is another false god because he thinks he is a god. Appropriately, he perishes. Yet the Africans accept it because "a man consumed by the gods lives forever" (T-T 104). To us, he is a man consumed by the false Leviathan.

Independence is seen as an artificial god because it is falsely interpreted by the Africans. In "A Gourdful of Glory", Mammii Ama is led to believe that a new flag will change everything. Imperialism taught that the British way was right; all other ways were wrong. All of these pseudo-gods, including technology, are seen as bondage in Laurence's work. One must come to terms with them and seek joy, freedom, inner truth, the true covenant.

This image includes the masks behind which hide the various false gods. In This Side Jordan Lamptey, the symbol of Highlife, has a "thin light-skinned face . . . a beaten copper mask with slitted eyes" (TSJ 20). Masks are usually blind or nearly so. The Devil Sasabonsam at night has a "grinning mask of rage" (TSJ 74). Jacob Abraham is a mask "like the ebony heads the carvers sell

to Europeans . . . eyes were shut" (TSJ 270). The mask is seen as a symbol of the cage, imprisoning the true self. The masks are blind to the true covenant, to inner peace. Underneath must come the growth, the journey of the true self to spiritual freedom. This idea recurs in Laurence's Canadian work, where Grandfather Connor is seen to have the mask of the bear in A Bird in the House, and the stone angel is eyeless.

Moses, in "Godman's Master", and Nathaniel both wear glasses, another mask symbol. Both have blurred vision, Moses due to rain and Nathaniel due to tears. Both face birth, death, and rebirth.

The mask shows repression and it represents the repressive aspects of missions, imperialism, exile; it ties in with the False Prophet of the Apocalypse. Laurence's journey is, according to Djwa, "the journey away from false gods into self-knowledge."[41]

The second category of biblical reference is Laurence's use of names and namesakes: Jacob Abraham, Moses, Ruth, Hagar, Joshua, Adamo, Matthew, Bram, and so on. Laurence does not impart the entire myth of namesakes to her characters; however, often the changes are as significant as the Bible's version. Reversal is common in Laurence. It is part of the ironic mode

[41] Ibid., p. 46.

and Laurence plays with it well.

In "The Rain Child", Ruth is close to David and his mother. Interestingly it is to her mother-in-law that the biblical Ruth says "Whither thou goest . . . thy people shall be my people". Laurence reverses it; Ruth is only almost white and she can never be among David's people. Ruth's son in the Bible is the forefather of David.

Some names are archetypes, such as Jacob, Hagar, Joshua, Moses, Abraham. Laurence's books are replete with images and connecting links. Every reading produces new insight. On one level she is a writer's writer; her ideal reader comes equipped with a priori knowledge of symbolism; but this is not to imply that her writing is elitist. Laurence speaks to every human heart. An example of a symbolic name is Morag, Gaelic for Sarah, which means "princess" but had meant quarrelsome.[42] It was changed by divine decree when Abraham married her. Many names are taken from Christian virtues such as Mercy, Charity, Love. By carefully using these, Laurence shows the influence of the missions on the Africans rather than the influence of the Bible on her writing.

[42] L. Sleigh and C. Johnson, The Book of Girls' Names (London: George G. Harrap, 1962), p. 192.

Often she gives added significance to very minor characters by suggestive names. Delilah is Miranda Kestoe's mid-wife. The biblical Delilah was the temptress; she made Samson lose his power by cutting his hair. In This Side Jordan Delilah cuts the umbilical cord of Johnnie's daughter, Mary. She releases Johnnie from his prison (again a reversal). Samson literally went to prison; Johnnie is released.

Other groups of names which are significant are those dealing with landscape, or those which carry symbolic associations. In the African works, the only decipherable names for the average Westerner are those that are explained in the text; however, Laurence intends these inferences or she would not explain Archipelago "a sea with many islands" and Ruth "child of rain" (England and tears). Violet is obvious, and Hilda, her colleague, means "battlemaiden", which is appropriate. Victor Edusei is well named; Candace in "Mask of Beaten Gold" means "pure, glowing, fire-white", again the inversal, for she is black in a white nurse's uniform.

Added to these names are the biblical overtones of Laurence's titles and chapter headings. Each of her works in its title suggests biblical myth. The language of her vision includes "innocent voyage", "rites of

passage", "Beulahland".[43] Often the place-name of a biblical story or the suggestion of an event gives an added dimension to a story. A good example is "Jericho's Brick Battlements" from A Bird in the House, or references to Eden, Paradise Chop Bar, the ladder of dreams, or wrestling with the angel. The names of Manawaka, Wachakwa, and Manitoba in the Canadian works link to the land, the Indian Spirits, and God's country (Manitou/ Manitoba). Hence the structure and background of Laurence's books reaffirm the biblical source of her imagery.

Much of the significance of the Old Testament involves land: exile from Eden, wandering in wilderness in search of the Promised Land. Laurence experienced her own exile from Canada in search of inner freedom. She said of Somaliland, "the land was not aware of me. I might enter its quietness or not, just as I chose. Hesitantly at first, because it had been my pride to be as perpetually busy as an escalator, I entered. Then I realized how much I had needed Sheikh, how I had been moving towards it through the years of pavements, of doom-shrieking newspapers and the jittery voices of radios" (PCB 27).

The desert presented to Laurence the cycles of

[43] See Isaiah 62:4.

life, in all their horror and splendour. For each year during Jilal (the dry season), "the Somalis were a dying people in a dying land. The dust filled their nostrils like a constant reminder of mortality" (PCB 143). Yet with the Gu (rains), everything blossomed and grew. Is this not to re-echo in her fictional Manawaka where in summer "the wind was everywhere, shuffling through the dust, wading and stirring until the air was thickly gray with grit" (SA 168)? In winter the snow was everywhere and "the breath seems to freeze in your throat, and your lungs feel full of ice" (TD 177).

The tropics present the same sort of dichotomy; however Laurence shows the life/death cycle in a slightly different way. The tropical weather can produce life or instant death. The gardens are lush, but the nights can be suffocating. The rains quench thirst but can also drown.

Seasonal changes parallel human movement for as Frye says, "the fundamental process is cyclical movement, the alternation of success and decline, effort and repose, life and death."[44] Hence the movement of the sun and moon reflect human birth, death, and anticipated rebirth. And this also becomes religiously significant not only in Christianity but in native religions.

[44] Frye, Anatomy of Criticism, p. 158.

In Laurence's African stories, the moon becomes very symbolic; she is the silver counterpart to the golden sun and related to land and water fetish practices. In Canadian literature, the moon is important to the Indians and Métis.

The waking and dreaming of day and night account for the birth and decline of the subconscious, of fantasy. In the African works, this takes such forms as Dorée's horrid sobbing in her sleep in "The Perfume Sea", and Nathaniel's inner torment in This Side Jordan. Another movement is that of life's flowing on despite tragedy.

There is the greater cycle of the glorious past (Eden) and the hope of the golden city (the Promised Land, the New Jerusalem). This is traditional tribal happiness or future independence. This is Nathaniel in his dilemma, and in his hope for Joshua.

Finally there is the movement of water: rain to springs to rivers to snow and around again. We have discussed the apocalyptic and demonic associations of water in Laurence's work, and the biblical implications of birth, death, and rebirth through water. All of the cyclical patterns are part of Christian symbolism; it is in this way that they relate to biblical imagery and myth. Birth, death, and the promise of rebirth

are central to Christianity. The hope of the Golden City, of the Promised Land, is both Judaic and Christian.

Frye notes that the elements natural to man are earth and air. Fire is traditionally considered above man, somewhere between human and divine, being associated with fiery heavenly bodies. Water is beneath man, associated with death. But of course both can become either apocalyptic or demonic in myth. Laurence makes abundant use of these mythic elements in her descriptions of landscape and environment in connection with her characters. It is interesting that it is a repeated characteristic, and often includes all four elements aligned to deliver a single powerful picture. The elements are linked to Christian myth: burning to the sacrificial lamb, burning cities, Moses and the burning bush, the candles; water is made blood and made flesh in Ezekiel; the earth is related to the garden, to barren exile; the air is linked to angels and wind. Frye maintains that "Dante had to pass through a ring of fire and the river of Eden".[45] Laurence uses both these ideas. Jeremy burns feverishly in "Mask of Beaten Gold". Adamo's sister is taken by a crocodile in "Voices of Adamo"; when the mother turned at the cry, she saw only the "blood

[45] Ibid., p. 144.

swirling like flames on the water" (T-T 206). In the Canadian work, Piquette's death is by fire, and there is mention in The Fire-Dwellers of crossing the Styx.

Laurence appears to link man and nature again through the elements, which are also within each person. A good example is in This Side Jordan where there is a parade of the Revival Church in which Aya, Nathaniel's wife, participates. All nature (sun, trees, wind) is at one with the dancing women. In contrast, the English imperialists, dressed in pastels, dance in artificial surroundings fortified by alcohol not religion (TSJ 141).

In the Canadian work, Mrs. Cameron cautions Stacey: "you have a terrible temper - you must learn to bank your fire" (F-D 212). Hagar is the stone angel, her fires banked. Pique, towards the end of The Diviners, has the most positive combination of the elements. It is, to me, the most apocalyptic image in the novel: "They walk through the long grass. Pique, suddenly happy, begins to run, sweeping at the grasses with her outstretched arms. Across the river, the maples are trees of flame. The river carries on its ripples the last of daylight" (TD 416). With nature at one with Pique, she must find grace. She is hope.

In his book on Canadian themes and images, Doug

Jones, a disciple of Frye, writes: "if the world of Canadian literature is an Old Testament world, it is a world of Adam separated from his Creator and cast out of Eden to wander in the wilderness. It is a world of the scattered tribes of Israel, in exile from the Old Kingdom and not yet restored to the new, in bondage to foreign powers, aliens in their own land, tied to the law of the fathers from which their hearts tend nonetheless continually to turn away."[46] I think the Canadian land is also the Promised Land, the New Jerusalem.[47]

In The Bush Garden, Frye speaks of the vastness of the land, Canada, that this produces "the feeling of nomadic movement over great distances."[48] Canada is the conquest of a "promised land". But conquest implies hostility. The conquest of the land by British imperialists for example, is an interesting parallel to the same conquest and later "salvaging"

[46] D.G. Jones, Butterfly on Rock, p. 15.

[47] c.f. Margaret Laurence, Interview with Bernice Lever. Margaret Laurence: The Writer and her Critics. Ed. William New (Toronto: McGraw-Hill Ryerson, 1977) p. 31.
B.L.: "Do you think Canada is a country of the Old Testament -- one of exile and alienation and punishing gods -- or is there a sense of hope and expectancy of the New Testament in our literature?"
M.L.: "I think there's both. I feel this strongly about my own work."

[48] Northrop Frye, The Bush Garden (Toronto: Anansi, 1971), p. 223.

(Cameron Shepherd's word in *This Side Jordan*) of Africa by the English imperialists.

Imperialism can work two ways: either the mother-country sends out her own masters to work for her in the colony, or the mother-country pushes out her underdogs to a new country where they become masters of another victim. The former happened in Africa; the latter in Canada, where the Highlanders were evicted from their land in Scotland and then settled the Prairies which were taken away from the Métis. This tale is retold throughout Laurence's Canadian work in *The Stone Angel*, *The Diviners*, *Heart of a Stranger*, *A Bird in the House*, and as a parable in *The Fire-Dwellers*. In *The Diviners*, the Highlanders are presented as both victor and victim. In *The Stone Angel* Hagar describes the way the 'promised land' looked to her:

> It seemed to me, from his tales, the Highlanders must be the most fortunate of all men on earth, spending their days in flailing about them with claymores, and their nights in eightsome reels . . . How bitterly I regretted that he'd left and had sired us here, the baldheaded prairie stretching out . . . in the sweltering summers and the winters that froze the wells and the blood.
> (*SA* 15)

The land of bondage is bald and barren, demonic.

However, in terms of a 'promised land' both Canada and Africa *should* be seen as what Frye calls "a vision of a social ideal."[49] Nature in apocalyptic terms is at one

[49] *Ibid.*, p. 239.

with man. Laurence uses both the native African and the Canadian Métis in her myth-making as symbols of the link to the land.

Africa and the African, nature and man, were traditionally at one. The spirits of organic and inorganic nature abound in African mythology. O. Mannoni, whose great influence and kindred spirit Laurence felt and whose work is discussed at length in my fourth chapter, wrote that "the savage . . . is identified in the unconscious with a certain image of instincts of the id . . . and civilized man is painfully divided between the desire to 'correct' the 'errors' of the savages and the desire to identify himself with them in his search for some lost paradise (a desire which at once casts doubt upon the merit of the very civilization he is trying to transmit to them)."[50] This supports Doug Jones' contention that the half-breed "is a particularly apt symbol of the divided mind . . . the quarrel between nature and culture."[51] Culture is the result of man's attempts to bring order to nature, to tame the land with civilized methods. The term 'half measure' is apt, half way between disorder and order, between freedom and repression.

[50] O. Mannoni, Prospero and Caliban: The Psychology of Colonization, trans. Pamela Powesland, with a foreword by Philip Mason (London: Methuen, 1956), p. 21.

[51] D.G. Jones, Butterfly on Rock, p. 43.

Consider the symbolism of the landscape of Africa painted in Laurence's writing. Nature is lush and full and wild, fertile disorder. Yet this sort of garden belongs to an imperialist, Helen Cunningham; to her Africa is really a prison. Although it is the only freedom to which Bedford can subscribe, although for them Africa is their only land of hope, they hate it because they refuse to take the land, the free disorder, into themselves. They are incapable of joy.

The African people are also seen by Laurence in terms of ripe fruit, of overflowing bounty, with ripe breasts, great hips. However, Matthew's white mother in "Drummer of all the World" is "always tired . . . very pale and thin" (T-T 2). The Africans are as unrestrained and natural as Kwaale, the true African of "The Rain Child", possessing all the elements, at one with the land: "She was all sun-coloured and whirling brown arms . . . I had never seen anyone with such a violence of beauty as she possessed, like surf or volcano, a spendthrift of splendour" (T-T 127).

The lushness here is seen as good, free, desirable. The inversal of it is in such women as Whiskey's wife in This Side Jordan, or Love in "A Fetish for Love", where beatings, repression, death of the spirit take place or, more horrifyingly, in Ayesha, the child

prostitute of "The Rain Child." This demonic aspect, the repression, the alienation from the land, or from freedom, comes out again in the Canadian female Métis, in Valentine and Piquette Tonnerre. Only Pique goes back to her people and the land, "a living place, a livingplace" (TD 448). This lies on the mountain, traditionally the place of epiphany.

Hence the land can be seen as both a prison and a refuge, with the latter suggesting choice and therefore freedom. Thus the reference in The Prophet's Camel Bell to the Haud as an island, "so seemingly remote that one almost doubted the existence of the rest of the world" (PCB 154), is close to Laurence's comment that she felt "the loneliness and the isolation of the land itself" (HS 15) in the Prairies, or to the comment by Kreisel that the Prairies are islands in the sea of land.[52] The land mirrors the people who are isolated and alienated. They are close to nature, freedom, and joy; but they are also in bondage, imprisoned by the need to survive in lands of blistering heat, perishing cold, torrential rains, or ruinous drought. Man and nature are inextricably linked.

Nathaniel summarizes all I have said of land as a

[52] Henry Kreisel, Writers of the Prairies, ed. Donald Stevens (Vancouver: U.B.C. Press, 1973), p. 263.

symbol and of the metaphor of the Israelites in relation to their land. He asks himself where he would be if he had stayed in the forest:

> I would be happier and not happier. No fumbling, no doubt, no shame . . . Only sweat and the forest, and at night songs and love. That was Eden, a long time ago.
>
> . . . .
>
> - But something said - Go . . . A man got to live until he dies: So now you're finding out. The city of strangers is your city, and the God of the conquerors is your God, and strange speech is in your mouth, and you have no home.
>
> (TSJ 167)

He is alienated from his land, he is wandering, he is a victim. He has been misled by the false prophet and he cannot communicate. Then he says "where shall I go, seeking a refuge for my soul?" He must take in the ancestors, the wilderness and go ahead, cross the River through Joshua. Similarly at the end of The Diviners, Pique represents our hope in the wilderness. She returns to the land of her people. The Métis bodies (bois brûlé, burnt wood) become a sacrifice to the God of the land.

This discussion has shown some examples of Laurence's use of biblical myth, names, and symbols. It shows the enormous influence of the Bible and the way in which Laurence universalizes her fiction. The references and the re-application of the exile myth lift both the African and the Canadian-set works from their particular

backgrounds to the road travelled by us all in our search for grace.

Chapter IV The Psychology of Colonization

> I had been born and had grown up in a country that once was a colony, a country which many people believed still to be suffering from a colonial outlook and like most Canadians I took umbrage swiftly at a certain type of English who felt they had a divinely bestowed superiority over the lesser breeds without the law.
>
> (*PCB* 16)

Margaret Laurence could never abide a colonial situation. Freedom and human dignity are all-important to her; bondage is repulsive. When she was put in the position of becoming a Memsahib in Somaliland, she rejected it. She became instead deeply interested in the character, the psychology of colonization. She sought to penetrate the minds of both oppressor and oppressed.

Although Laurence has explored bondage and its release in many forms in her fiction, the most visible is in colonial situations in Africa and in Canada. This chapter will show her psychological insights on characters in colonial situations, and should point once more to the parallels between her treatment of native Africans and Métis. The discussion includes not only the psychology of colonization, but also the psychology behind its use in literature.

After Laurence had lived in Africa but before she had completed her fiction about it, she read the work of O. Mannoni, a French ethnographer. *Prospero and Cali-*

ban: The Psychology of Colonization deals with the dependency complex which Mannoni encountered in Madagascar. Laurence found in this work and in Mannoni a kindred spirit, because she realized that his observations were the very ones she had experienced. I shall outline Mannoni's theory in this chapter and show the same strains running throughout Laurence's fiction.

During my research I found it both interesting and enlightening to compare some of Laurence's observations about natives and exploiters with the work of Micere Githae-Mugo, a Kenyan who recently (1973) completed a doctoral thesis on "Visions of Africa ." Her thesis in turn suggested the work of Frantz Fanon, a psychologist from the Antilles. Both these not only relate to Laurence's work, but also include a discussion of Mannoni's book.

A colonial situation can exist between two people, husband and wife, parent and child, wherever there is a servile situation. Laurence has been hailed as a women's liberation writer because of her hope for the inner freedom of Stacey MacAindra. But this is to oversimplify. Mac's and Stacey's relationship is really another example of dependency.

This chapter will therefore explore other colonial situations beyond imperialist-native in Laurence's work, because all her characters are part of one tribe or

another. As she herself said, "where tribalism becomes . . . frighteningly dangerous is where the tribe - whatever it is, the Hausa, the Ibo, the Scots Presbyterians, the Daughters of the American Revolution, the in-group - is seen as 'the people', the human beings, and the others, the un-tribe, are seen as sub-human. This is not Africa's problem alone; it is everyone's."[53]

Laurence was not "influenced" by Mannoni, because she had solidified her own observations before she read his work; but their ideas meshed in many ways. As a result some of her subsequent stories such as "The Voices of Adamo" were written as illustrations of the theories. It is necessary to outline the hypothesis and then show the close relationship Mannoni's theory has with Laurence's work. Therefore I have juxtaposed facets of theory and examples from Laurence's fiction. It is important to bear in mind once again that she herself is a keenly perceptive writer. Characterization, getting inside the minds of her characters, is her greatest strength.

Mannoni cautions that missionaries and doctors who observe natives with the idea of changing them are not far from imperialism. Laurence was able to penetrate

[53] Margaret Laurence, "Ten Years' Sentences", Margaret Laurence: The Writer and her Critics, ed. New, p. 21.

because, like Mannoni, she wished only to observe, not to change. According to Mannoni, "a colonial situation is created . . . the very instant a white man, even if he is alone, appears in the midst of a tribe even if it is independent so long as he is thought to be rich or powerful or merely immune to the local forces of magic, and so long as he derives from his position, even though only in his most secret self, a feeling of his own superiority."[54] Also essential are two beliefs on the part of the white man: "that the mentality of the native is incomprehensible, that there is therefore no point in wasting any time on it, and that since our way of thinking is the only right one, we should impose it on the rest of the world in the interests of reason and morality."[55] Mannoni claims that colonial inferiority is different from racism because racism means seeing the colour of one's skin as a disadvantage which can only occur when one is part of a minority. In the colonies, the whites are the minority; yet the blacks feel inferior, not through racism but colonialism.

Matthew's father in "Drummer of all the World" is a good example of the Imperialist missionary, and Matthew says of the situation: "We were conquerors in Africa, we

[54] O. Mannoni, Prospero and Caliban: The Psychology of Colonization, p. 18.

[55] Ibid., p. 20.

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" (T-T 18).

Mannoni and Laurence encountered the same patterns of behavior among dependents. There is on the part of the native (Abdi in The Prophet's Camel Bell) the need to be dependent, to sanctify the protectors (your lady is a queen) and to have constant reassurance, through gifts, of this protection. There is therefore no gratitude because it is a parent/child relationship. No more gifts means abandonment and rejection, and this leads to resentment. This same experience is shown by Laurence in The Diviners, where the Métis, Jules, boards with a white family: "Many say it is foolhardy of the Pearls, who need not expect any gratitude from a half-breed" (TD 127).

The most important ritual to influence native peoples is that of the cult of the dead. Africans keep the spirits of their ancestors alive; it is essential to an understanding of natives and of Laurence's characters. "The Voices of Adamo" is the most relevant story. It is about an African boy, Adamo, whose tribe dies of a plague, and who begins anew with another tribal attachment. His father tells him that a family is like a tree: "A man is a leaf . . . the leaf grows for awhile,

then falls but the tree lives forever. One leaf is nothing. The tree is all" (T-T 206). Mannoni says that in Madagascar, the maternal uncle is important; in the story of Adamo, it is a friend of the mother that takes Adamo during the plague.

When Christianity was brought to Africa, Mannoni claims that it caught on as a "social mask". But for any real problems, there was always a return to ancestor beliefs. Laurence shows this often: in Danso's dying mother in "The Merchant of Heaven", in Love's fetish, and Bonsu in "The Pure Diamond Man", and perhaps even in the vision of freedom as the new "ju ju."

Mannoni claims that imperialists and their victims are intrinsically masters or servants; it is not an accident that a colonial situation develops. The dreams of natives reflect the need for dependence and security from their fears. The complexes within the imperialist are also latent and formed in infancy. Says Mannoni, "colonial life is simply a substitute to those who are still obscurely drawn to a world without men."[56] Again, "the colonial has fled because he cannot accept men as they are . . . combined with an urge to dominate."[57] So it is that Laurence's Mrs. Webley-Pryce in "The Perfume Sea"

[56] Ibid., p. 105.

[57] Ibid., p. 108.

says ,"if a person goes in for colonial administration, he must go to a colony, mustn't he?" (T-T 27).

In part three of his book, Mannoni discusses the child of the imperialist and the modern native. The modern native with education is cut off; it is "the painful apprenticeship to individualism."[58] Mannoni discusses independence or nationalism. Because the native likes ritual, he is given administrative routine and this provides security. This is the way Laurence channels Adamo, from the tribe to the army routine. His captain becomes his god. When Captain Fossey, not understanding the dependence relationship, eases the routine and releases Adamo, there is violent disobedience, parricide.

The tremendous hold of ritual and the cult of the dead is caught by Laurence's consistent mention of it. The Tomorrow-Tamer stories all refer to the dead. Kofi lives in a village where "Nana Ayensu poured libation to the dead and guardian grandsires . . . where every leaf and flower had fed on someone's kin, and the wind was the thin whisper-speech of ancestral spirits" (T-T 78). Kofi, like Adamo, transfers from his family to a bridgeman tribe with Emmanuel as the leader. At the same time he acquires a dependent, Akua. The silver bridge becomes magical; when Emmanuel is about to break the spell, Badu,

[58] Ibid., p. 130.

the African interpreter, senses something is wrong. Kofi's death is, in Mannoni's sense, inevitable because of the threat to the cult of magic and death.

Adamo and Kofi have different stories but are in fact very similar. In "The Voices of Adamo", there is the old woman of the village who is between life and death. The voice of Adamo's mother comes to him from death. "He was determined to die because he could not think what else to do. Dead he might find his people" (T-T 210).

The drums of the corp draw Adamo to the army; he likens them to the African talking drums. He joins the African army and agrees to serve for five years although he does not know the name of his country. The tribe means everything; the nation, nothing. Adamo calls "Big Drum" Mami, meaning uncle; even this links to the maternal uncle mentioned by Mannoni. Army ritual is perfect for Adamo's psyche. Captain Fossey and Adamo form a master protector/child relationship based on loyalty. Fossey gives Adamo money. Adamo does things "so all things will go well" (T-T 212) as a ritual performed to a god. The description which Laurence allows Adamo to give Captain Fossey is important. Adamo sees in Fossey a protector ; he finds him "repulsive", "unpleasant", "offensive" but this is "in no way significant" (T-T 217). The Africans see whites as interesting but not to be com-

pared to themselves.

Mannoni's observations are shown again in Fossey's lack of enthusiasm to return to England. Fossey has changed; the role of the master dominates his personality now and he knows that this will be impossible in England. What is more, no one else is going to use his slave; so he dismisses him, thinking he will be happy with a High-life Band. But Adamo is ruined because "there were no people in this place, no known voices. None to tell or guide, none even to mourn" (T-T 222). When Adamo goes to kill Fossey, the latter thinks Adamo wants "to express his gratitude" (T-T 222). Of course this is impossible because of the colonial relationship. Adamo, having killed Fossey, only wants to know the new ritual, what must be done.

This cult of the dead is extended to the Manawaka works. At the beginning of The Diviners, Morag says of her parents: "I remember their deaths, but not their lives. Yet they're inside me, flowing unknown in my blood and moving unrecognized in my skull" (TD 19). The pictures of her parents are her totems. The cult of ancestors is also prevalent in the stories told by Christie Logan about the Highlanders, and by Jules Tonnerre about his grandfather, Rider. Yet another link with African magic and fetish is the divining of garbage and water. Such parallels between The Diviners

and Laurence's African works are astounding. For as Phyllis Gotlieb said of The Diviners, "In the Métis, 'Skinner' Tonnerre, and his family, she has brought to life and flesh what I had previously seen only dimly as a shadow; she has done for these people what I so much admired her doing for the Africans in her early stories and novel This Side Jordan."[59]

The imperialists must also be discussed. In Chapter Three we mentioned the physical characteristics and symbolic overtones given them. However their behaviour links Laurence's observations to Mannoni's. Laurence first describes various Memsahibs in Somaliland in The Prophet's Camel Bell. The list given by them of things to avoid are really reflections of their own fears and perhaps wishes. There was the terror of rape, of stealing, of lack of gratitude, the idea that natives were stupid because they were different, and the total lack of any understanding of the soul of the African.

In her fiction, Laurence made use of her tremendous talent for psychological observation. In This Side Jordan Cora, Miranda, Helen and their husbands all are typical of the mentality that could become colonial. Laurence shows something of Johnnie Kestoe's childhood

[59] Phyllis Gotlieb, A Review of The Diviners. The Tamarack Review, 63 (Spring, 1974), p. 80.

to show us the sort of scar in infancy that can produce the colonial mentality. Johnnie was a nobody who had to make it on his own, aligning himself with the best possible person to get the best possible results. Hence it is easy to see his swing towards Africanization. A Jamaican had hurt him in childhood. Once he hurts an African, he is partially restored.

Miranda, white and naively liberal, bends over backwards to get close to Nathaniel, not seeming to understand the reason he cannot tolerate her. At the end, he realizes that she has meant well, and that she has her own fears and bondage in a strange country. He sees her as human rather than as white.

Helen is a terror-ridden hysterical woman who is in her own prison with Bedford who cannot go home again. He is an ex-army man, used to a colonial situation; his mind cannot tolerate anything else. Helen really fears the threat of returning to England, although her fear manifests itself as terror of Africa.

Cora is another prisoner in Africa. She detests it, no, not even that: for her it does not exist. Her house is English and her only communication is with fabric, exotic brocades. Is Africa the exotic for her, in small doses only? James' contact is also with fabric, the outer shell of Africa. Again they are colonials, can only exist in this one place. Both Cora and Helen

continually relate that neither James nor Bedford was always like this. In other words, as Mannoni points out, the situation brings out the superiority complex in place of the inner terror and inferiority.

Another story, "A Fetish for Love", shows a different imperialist, Constance. She totally misunderstands her servant couple, Sunday and Love. "Constance was friendly, and she saw no reason why other people should not be the same" (T-T 161). Love is obedient to Sunday. But she appears to be sterile, which for an African woman is a fate worse than death. The problem is seen as Love's, not Sunday's. Constance's husband, Brooke, has a "laissez-faire" policy towards Blacks. But he is a master of Constance; he pats her head and mutters at her; she does not seem to notice this strange parallel between herself and Love. She is a white liberal and she wants to change Africa. It fascinates her, it is strange, and romantic. What is abnormal is her desire to get inside Love, "to see Love's face when the girl believed herself to be alone" (T-T 166). She is seeking the REAL face of Africa, like Hardacre in "The Pure Diamond Man", who wanted to see natives in the jungle.

Ritual is also evoked in the story. Sunday adjusts food to "present a correct appearance" (T-T 168). This is reminiscent of the Laurence's servant, Mohamed,

in Somaliland. Sunday ritually beats Love because she does not produce a baby. Constance wants to change African ways by taking Love to the doctor. He sums up Constance perfectly by saying he's not God and cannot guarantee anything. The medicine he gives Love changes nothing.

However "Love's tomatoes were planted and grew and bore fruit in what seemed an incredibly short time to Constance" (T-T 175). That is the clue that Love is fertile and that it is Sunday who cannot reproduce. Love feels threatened and goes to the "ju ju" woman. Magic will work; technology did not. Constance cannot change Love. Finally she understands that she cannot impose freedom or release. In this story, the colonial situation is not so much that Love is the victim of Constanee, but that Love and Sunday have a marital dependency relationship that Constance cannot understand. Perhaps after all, Laurence is showing that freedom or independence imposed will not undo the inherent situation; it must come from within. Mannoni said that "there is a sociological law which admits of no exception that all peoples, even the most ignorant and backward, are capable of governing and administering themselves, provided of course, that they are left to choose their own methods."[60] The reason

[60] Mannoni, p. 174.

independence failed in Africa was first because the English said "you are free provided you do this", and second because the corrupt Blacks became themselves dictators, like Sunday.

Mannoni sums up his book as a study of the colonial situation which is based on "mutual incomprehension ." Laurence says that therefore we must learn to communicate, to touch, not just to observe the terror and hate without knowledge. Johnnie Kestoe finally touches Emerald tenderly, and Nathaniel wants to communicate with Miranda.

The colonial situation was explored by Laurence throughout her work. Moving from Africa to Canada in her fiction, she switched from one colony to another. The Stone Angel introduces the half-breed Tonnerres and the pioneering Curries. We see the Scots as a displaced tribe coming from the Scottish Highlands and settling in the colony of Canada, routing the native Indians and Métis in the process. Mannoni claims that "people who go to a colony to take advantage of a well-established colonial situation are a far different human type from those who set out to conquer a new country."[61] Canada was not a developed colonial situation; it was new, and the native people had to be conquered. The

[61] Ibid., p. 126.

Scots therefore became the Imperialists and no reader can forget Hagar's father, Vanessa's Grandfather Connor, or her Grandmother MacLeod, "rigid as a cameo" (BH 116).

The Métis in The Stone Angel are described by the Whites as inferior, bestial, and undesirable. John is told to stay away from them; Bram uses them as servants or to sleep with, and they live near the cemetery.

A Jest of God depicts Ukranians as a similar tribe of subhumans. Nick has "prominent cheekbones, slightly slanted eyes . . . black straight hair" (JG 86). Rachael perceives him as free and he asks her if she thought they laid women and did slavic dances. It is another example of a wandering tribe's being considered inferior to the establishment.

In The Fire-Dwellers, the Métis family of Tonnerres is reintroduced, but there is a second Indian motif in the character of Luke Venturi. He is like an Indian medicine-man; he cures Stacey. He is linked to the Indians in the Northwest whose culture is dead, who have been extinguished by white people. And his science fiction story about the Greyfolk is certainly about the Métis (half-breeds). Laurence's angry irony about the African administrator of Greyfolk is a very double-edged sword. Since Canadian whites were once, like Africans, victims of the English, it is just as surprising that in reality they are now administrators of their own "greyfolk".

Brooke Skelton is a fine example of Mannoni's "child of the imperialist," who considers himself superior by nature to the natives. Brooke is born in India. His father is headmaster of a boys' Church of England school near Calcutta, yet he is sent to England to school at age six. Like Matthew in "Drummer of all the World," the colony school is not good enough for the child of the imperialist headmaster. Brooke was really loved by his _ayah_ or housekeeper; he still misses her. His apartment in Winnipeg has Benares brass, a kashmir shawl. Brooke wants Morag to be virginal, young, a child. He wants to be her master. The chapter of their life in Toronto is called "Raj Mataj," a pun on Razzmatazz and on Taj Mahal. Their Indian rug reminds Brooke of India, but he says, "I couldn't go back. It's all changed too much. I wouldn't know it. I wouldn't feel at home there any longer" (_TD_ 227). He asks Morag if she has been a good girl before he has sexual intercourse with her; this is the master/slave relationship.

When Morag brings Jules home, Brooke's true self shows: "I thought it was supposed to be illegal to give liquor to Indians" (_TD_ 269). This signals the end for

Morag. She says she is sorry, recognizes her debt to him, but there is nothing left in her for Brooke.

It is interesting that both Morag and Brooke wear glasses, for as Brooke says, "life has many hazards for the not-fully-sighted" (TD 195). The two are thus linked as a master who is imperfect and has the need to be master, and the slave who at that point lets herself be led.

Micere Githae-Mugo has written the most interesting thesis I have seen about Laurence's vision of Africa. Laurence is one of four writers about Africa studied by Mugo, the others being Elspeth Huxley, Thiong'O, and Achebe. I am in no way attempting either to link or to compare Laurence's work with these writers although in Chapter 5, I shall place her work in the context of other Canadians' work about the colonial situations of Africa and Canada. However, in this chapter, I am interested in the psychology of bondage, and Mugo's thesis not only provides much insight but also led me to further readings.

Mugo is African and she has enormous admiration for Laurence's work. She wrote a review of A Tree for Poverty in which she stated that "most western writers of the colonial era came to Africa posing as Messrs. Know-All . . . they had nothing to learn, nothing to understand. Margaret Laurence's records stand clean

in this respect and her works are her best witness. She is one of the very few who tried to learn and understand."[62] Mugo does accuse Mannoni of "the outrageous assumption that he understands and can explain the African."[63] Mugo does not use Mannoni's theories in connection with Laurence, however, but in her discussion of Huxley. Mugo bases much of what she says on the writings of Frantz Fanon, whose book Black Skin, White Masks is discussed below.

Mugo discusses four levels of development - or regression - in Africa. These are linked to the various ways in which writers see Africa. It will be self-evident where Laurence fits. First there is the traditional phase with "free, contented and functional societies in which man was at home with his surroundings and in harmony with himself as an individual."[64] Naturally, says Mugo, this society is both strong and weak. There follow the stages of invasion and colonization in which the vision is one of confusion and dispossession of the soil. Then comes freedom, where Africans look at themselves only to see corruption and

[62] Micere Githae-Mugo, "Somali Literature in Translation," a review of A Tree for Poverty. Journal of Canadian Fiction, 1,2 (Spring, 1972), p. 86.

[63] Micere Githae-Mugo, "Visions of Africa", p. 197.

[64] Ibid., p. ii, abstract.

neo-colonialism.

The first three phases are very evident in Laurence's work where she discusses the life of tribal naturalness, the uprooting, and the problem of transition from tribe to colony to freedom for such characters as Nathaniel Amegbe. The last phase is only suggested in most of Laurence's work, mainly because she left Africa just as Ghana and Somaliland were becoming independent. But her prophetic words and her essays reveal the corruption of the last phase.

In the Manawaka works, there is again the traditional phase of Indian life, then of invasion and dispossession. At present there is still resentment, rebellion, but no freedom. On the other hand for the Scots, there was traditional Highland life, then a leaving of the land and then a neo-colonialism in their treatment of the Indian/Métis. Although the phases vary, it is certainly a re-application in Laurence's mind of the psychology of colonization or bondage. It is this psychological insight which makes Laurence's novels and stories so successful.

Linked to the phases in Laurence's work, Mugo explores the role of the African dealing with other Africans. This is interesting because most critics only consider the English dealing with the Africans. Mugo brings tremendous insight to <u>This Side Jordan</u>

and to many of The Tomorrow-Tamer stories. The black man interprets against or for his own people. For instance, Moses, a Ghanian, frees Godman. But Danquah is the owner of the Hail Mary Chop Bar in "The Tomorrow-Tamer", and he is a sell-out with his pink rayon shirt and delusions of grandeur; Badu, "the clerk-interpreter . . . wore white clothes and pointed shoes and a hat like an infant umbrella" (T-T 85). These last two are the voices of neo-colonialism in the story "The Tomorrow-Tamer." These are blacks against blacks.

In This Side Jordan, Mugo sees Nathaniel as a "cabbage," a wishy-washy character. He is a victim, and hence not the hero or protagonist of the book. I disagree because he has the courage to be in spite of all the odds. He is a terrified individual and he is able to overcome that and be strong: "But I do not want my people to be what they once were. I want them to be something more" (TSJ 102). However I am white; it is interesting that an African critic sees Nathaniel as a coward, an embarrassment.

In Mugo's mind, Victor is the hero, the educated but not caged African. Mugo says he is typically a slob, and remains African and a rebel "by deliberately assuming a popular white stereotype of the African - that of the rough, dirty and slovenly bush man."[65]

[65] Ibid., p. 252.

He truly wants to help Africa although he could certainly get better jobs. He marries a bush girl because she is purely African and because they need each other. Victor sees ahead: "You wait after Independence. You'll see such oppression as you never believed possible. Only of course it'll be all right then - it'll be black men oppressing black men, and who could object to that? . . . We've got the slave mentality" (TSJ 118). This is Mannoni, Laurence, and Mugo rolled in a nutshell.

There are no real relationships between Métis families shown in Laurence's Canadian works because native peoples are a minority in Canada and Laurence shows them as such. Perhaps Billy Joe, Jules' friend and partner, is the closest parallel. From Billy we learn Jules' feeling towards Morag as she goes to him for the last time: "Outside the door to Jules' room, Billy Joe stopped. He looked oddly determined as though Jules might not approve of what he had done, but also as though he knew that this was necessary and what Jules wanted even though in an unadmitted way" (TD 443).

Laurence also has a spiritual link with Frantz Fanon. Like Mugo, Fanon is Black, but from the Antilles. Like Mugo his work is charged with anger, and like her, he thinks Mannoni can be dangerous.

I tend to think Fanon misunderstands on purpose. My intent is to show that the psychological explorations

done by Fanon are important to a further understanding of Laurence's characters, Black, White, and Métis. Fanon discusses black and white relationships in a way Mannoni does not. And whether Laurence knows Fanon's work or not, she would, I am sure, read with the shock of recognition.

Fanon states at the beginning of Black Skin, White Masks that if a black man goes to the mother country for any length of time, he changes. He becomes whiter. He is, however, feared by Blacks. Here is Dr. Quansah in "The Rain Child": "The young laboratory technicians at the station - they do not trust me . . ." (T-T 125). Fanon's whole argument is that in the world, white is considered best, and the thing is to get "whiter to get ahead."[66] He claims this is inferiority and not colonial mentality and it is racist. So the black man renounces the jungle or his blackness and becomes white.

Fanon then deals with the relationship between a coloured woman and a white man. He claims that this means the woman wants to whiten herself. Is this Candace ("pure white light" in a white nurse's uniform) in "Mask of Beaten Gold"? Or is Fanon's idea closer to Piquette in "The Loons"? When Vanessa sees her as a seventeen-year-old, "her lipstick was bright carmine,

[66] Frantz Fanon, Black Skin, White Masks (N.Y.: Grove Press Inc., 1967), p. 19.

and her hair was cut short and frizzily permed" (BH 123). She becomes whiter because her straight Indian hair is permed. She announces she is getting married to "an English fella, works in the stockyards in the city there, a tall guy, got blond wavy hair . . . her defiant face momentarily, became unguarded and unmasked . . . she had been forced to seek the very things she so bitterly rejected" (BH 125). She is the Métis in the white mask. Fanon says that God is white - it is a white world.

Laurence expresses a similar idea in "The Merchant of Heaven", where Danso paints God's Son Black. The same reversal occurs in Johnnie Kestoe's relationships with various black women. Fanon claims that "when my restless hands caress those white breasts, they grasp white civilization and dignity and make them mine."[67] Perhaps then Johnnie is rejecting the order of white civilization and embracing Africa, as well as the symbolic invasion and conquest of a colony. Certainly Emerald is not trying to become white because she is unwilling.

Jules Tonnerre and Morag are another mixed pair, and their union is believable in The Diviners. At their first meeting, Morag is terrified of Jules' sexual allusions and advances. Again, this supports Fanon's idea that white women are frightened of black

[67] Ibid., p. 63.

men, that they will rape them because the black man is thought of as genital, bestial, cannibalistic (Shakespeare's Caliban as both Mannoni and Fanon point out, is the anagram of cannibal). Laurence shows this in the terror of natives felt by white women in the African and Manawaka works. But Morag really wants Jules, again a typical feeling. A rejection of sex is the terror, desired but suppressed.

The next meeting between Morag and Jules takes place two years but three pages later, after he has joined the army, the Cameron Highlanders. We wonder whether this makes Jules whiter, but it is not the reason the relationship with Morag succeeds. The Logans, the Gunns are all Highlanders, displaced, tribal. Although they became the masters of the Métis, this is not true of Christie Logan, who is socially the lowest white man around. Mannoni points out that white women rarely have relationships with black men because it is socially intolerable. For Morag that is not so because her social position is already intolerable.

Quite naturally they go to Jules' shack. Morag removes her own mask, her glasses, and they make love. In the relationship nothing is ordered, nothing planned, nothing conventional. It is a free relationship. Laurence is saying that there is a need to touch the other (Fanon says it too) but because of the conventions

of modern civilization, it is next to impossible; all that is possible is an incomplete relationship. Hence it works. Morag is not trying to be romantic or afraid after her initial reaction. Jules is not getting any more order in his life because of Morag.

Various Canadian critics have discussed the relationship between Indians and Whites in Canadian literature. John Moss in his thematic treatment of Canadian literature, Patterns of Isolation, said that "the function of the Indian or half-breed lover (was) as an expression of escape, reconciliation, defiance."[68] He adds that "for Laurence the Indian seems not to embody freedom or defiance but our collective guilt which we continue to generate through our treatment of them."[69] Actually both ideas are true of Laurence. As discussed in Chapter Three, the Indian/Métis/African is a symbol of a freer, natural life in her work; however Moss is right that there is guilt, not so much as a symbol but as a constant reality. Some quotations from Laurence's fictional characters express it well:

Miranda: To me that's the real meaning of whiteman's burden - the accumulated guilt, something we've inherited. (TSJ 54)

[68] John Moss, Patterns of Isolation (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1974), p. 106.

[69] Ibid., p. 107.

Stacey: Even her presence is a reproach to me . . . for the sins of my fathers, maybe. The debts are inherited and how could the damage ever be undone or forgiven? (F-D 265)

Vanessa: I could not reach Piquette . . . but all that summer she remained as both a reproach and a mystery to me . (BH 122)

Laurence dismisses the romantic idea of the Indian in "The Loons", for "as an Indian, Piquette was a dead loss" (BH 121). But Laurence shows the popular image of female Métis in The Diviners: "you know half-breed girls can't wait to get fucked by any guy who comes along" (TD 422).

All of the above supports Fanon's evaluation of black/white involvement, which affirms my contention that Laurence's work about African and Métis is a continuum. Mannoni also said that there was "the sexual appeal of racial differences"[70] and that half-castes spelled trouble.

Margaret Atwood sees the Indians as "a yardstick of suffering against which the whites can measure their own and find it lacking."[71] This is the Indian as victim. And it is very like Fanon's statement that "the Negro is a comparison."[72] Atwood quotes Leonard

[70] Mannoni, p. 111.

[71] Margaret Atwood, Survival. A Thematic Guide to Canadian Literature (Toronto: Anansi, 1972), p. 99.

[72] Fanon, Black Skin, White Masks, p. 211.

Cohen's Beautiful Losers: "The English did to us what we did to the Indians, and the Americans did to the English what the English did to us. I demand revenge for every-one."[73] Atwood reminds us that for F's revenge to occur would mean a return to wild nature, the dissolving of civilization. This is exactly what Laurence depicts in her story "A Queen in Thebes," which Barry Callaghan called "an outright fake, a piece of undergraduate junk."[74] Perhaps he misunderstood the story.

Another much stronger example of the Métis situation is the allegorical story "The Half-Husky." On the surface it is about a half-breed dog and a cruel little boy. It could also suggest the Métis and the imperialist, the Scot who has been victimized at home and becomes the tormentor of the lesser animal. The hate and fury built up in the poor dog suggest the tremendous feelings of anger within the Métis who are restricted to certain areas and who are constantly taunted by Whites, the animal who is

[73] Atwood, Survival, p. 102.

[74] Barry Callaghan, "The Writings of Margaret Laurence". Margaret Laurence: The Writer and her Critics, p. 131. Laurence's story was published in 1964 and is the closest she ever comes to annihilating modern civilization. She says in the interview with Graeme Gibson in Eleven Canadian Novelists, p. 192: "The destruction of this planet is one of them . . . I feel very strongly about a great many things, and I have not yet discovered a way of dealing with these things convincingly . . .".

always put where Grandfather isn't, and who is finally killed because he is angry. Interestingly, Atwood points out this metaphor between Indian and animal as victim: "Indians (are) seen as animals once free, wild and beautiful, now caged, captive and sickly."[75]

Fanon is like Laurence in his statements about the role of the black man: "I made myself the poet of the world . . . the soul of the white man was corrupted . . . the presence of the Negroes beside the whites is in a way an insurance policy on humanness."[76] This is close to Laurence's idea in her essay "Man of our People," that the Indians can show us the way to live in relation to the land.

Fanon suggests that the history of the Blacks reveals that they are not primitive, but of a very old civilization. This is Nathaniel's point in teaching African Civilization of the Past. His hope is that Ghana will rise again. Victor, with heavy irony, forwards the opposite opinion that "there were no African civilizations of the past worth mentioning" (TSJ 22). Laurence explores Victor's belief further in her essay "The Very Best Intentions" (1964), four years after the novel. Mensah, who is the Victor of the story, a young

[75] Atwood, Survival, p. 99.

[76] Fanon, Black Skin, White Masks, p. 23.

barrister in the essay, makes very disparaging comments about African history, in a game with the white liberal he saw as Laurence. Again in this essay, Laurence suggests the corruption of Nkrumah, the question mark behind freedom.

The idea of colonial situations recurring continuously and universally, and of Mannoni's observations of the psychology behind it, seem to haunt Laurence. She introduces threads of it into her writing in innocuous as well as obvious places. In The Diviners, there is a novel called Prospero's Child wherein the girl must utterly reject the hero, His Excellency, to become her own person. There is mention, too, of a story about the Austrian who built up a feudal society in the West of Canada, only to be totally rejected. This story as "Tal des Walde" is one that Laurence actually wrote as an undergraduate.[77]

There are many examples of a 'one to one' colonial situation: the way Grandfather Connor rules his household, Hagar's role as a housekeeper for Mr. Oatley, housewife Stacey Cameron MacAindra with her husband Mac, the slave of Thor; and Rachael and her mother whose dependency relationship reverses itself at the end of A Jest of God. In the African works, there is constantly the subservient, servile wife, obedient to her

[77] See note 30.

husband.

Laurence uses many devices to show the hatred felt by the victim in a colonial situation. There are proverbs such as "Authority is never loved", mammy lorry slogans; there are sneers: there are the sexual abuses by Johnnie (of Whiskey's wife and of Emerald), and by whites towards the Tonnerre girls. One of the most recurring pictures is of spitting on the white world, the ultimate symbol of revulsion and a social comment on the order of the world.

This Side Jordan introduces a disgusted Victor spitting his anger at Charity's dancing with Johnnie Kestoe. A little later, Victor spits again as if Laurence is trying to re-emphasize his hatred of the situation. Further along, Nathaniel spits on the white man's crucifix. Adua, his mother-in-law says "We send our sons to school and they spit on us" (TSJ 72). But no, Nathaniel spits on the white men - "the pressure of hate" (TSJ 222).

In The Stone Angel, Bram spits on Hagar's sense of order, and the Prisoner's Song sings of spitting on people from the top of T. Eaton, the epitome of white wealth and convention. "Skinner" Tonnerre spits on the white world of the Pearls when he and Morag first meet on the bridge.

Laurence has written sympathetically and empathe-

tically of the psychology of bondage. At times her fiction is angry enough to approach Frantz Fanon's The Wretched of the Earth which depicts the revolutionary mind, enraged from being subservient. Always, however, Laurence reminds herself and us that we "haven't lived in that particular cage" (F-D 266), have "never worn his sandals" (PCB 17), or should "just try walking in his shoes" (TD 428).

In Nathaniel Amegbe, Laurence depicts the psychology of colonization:

> --You whitemen. You Europeans. You Englishmen. You whom we used to call masters. You whom we do not call master any longer. You who say you come only to teach us. You would like us to forget, wouldn't you? You forget - it is easy for you. But we do not forget the cutting down of the plant, the burning of the plant; the tearing up by the roots. (TSJ 209).

Chapter V Contexts and Conclusions

> The trees are the same - only the leaves and the branches are different.[78]

Margaret Laurence has often been compared with other Commonwealth writers about Africa, and has been linked to such African novelists as Chinua Achebe. I think, however, that it is more valid to place her work in the context of other Canadian writers whose work deals with African or Canadian natives. In this final chapter, I shall briefly outline two novels set in Africa by Dave Godfrey and David Knight, as well as works set in Canada by Rudy Wiebe, W.P. Kinsella, and George Woodcock. I shall then draw parallels from among their books and Laurence's fiction in an effort to better understand Laurence's tradition.

It has been said that Laurence captures the African so well because she is herself from a former colony, a young, emergent nation. In a recent article, Deane Downey wrote that "a very plausible explanation for Canadian fascination with African nationalism can be found in the fact that many of the conflicts present in a newly

[78] Quoted by Clara Thomas in "A Conversation about Literature: An Interview with Margaret Laurence and Irving Layton." Journal of Canadian Fiction, I,1 (Winter, 1972), p. 68. The statement was written by a student of Clara Thomas.

independent African country have their clearly identifiable counterparts in recent Canadian experience,"[79] Laurence's African mirror. But Downey only considers African work and does not mention the similarities between Africans and Métis in Laurence's writing.

Laurence has explored the identity of the Métis in the same way as she did the African. My concern is whether all Canadian writers depict native people in the same way, whether there is some common denominator between Laurence and her co-writers.

The last section of the chapter will draw the conclusions that Laurence's vision of freedom and its inverse, bondage, is her universal, constant concern. Finally, she shows that individual freedom is a coming to terms with oneself, something which then eddies out to encompass mankind.

Dave Godfrey was born in Winnipeg in 1938, but he considers himself a Nova Scotian. He went to Africa for CUSO. The New Ancestors was his first novel; it is about the problems of the newly independent Ghana, and Godfrey claims to have had vast quantities of notes from which to work. He acknowledges a great debt to James

[79] Deane Downey, "The Canadian Identity and African Nationalism". Canadian Literature, 75 (Winter, 1977), p. 15.

Joyce: "In a sense you're trying to say things in a different way."[80] This does show up very strongly in the novel and is a distinguishing style. It adds to the turbulence of the content.

A musician, Godfrey has said that music comes into his writing; rhythm becomes dominant. There are countless examples, and the following excerpts should serve not only to convey Godfrey's stylistic power, but also to show the difference from Laurence's style, which is more lyrical.

> Tin flash in the sun-dazzle, but in the shadows safety like dark cocoa. Tin piled on bare studs so that the carpenter can work wind-refreshened.[81]

or

> 'End Rain now!' he shouts. 'End Rain & Sea. Now. - Double Quick-Quick. No Stop for Chop. End Rain Now.'. Laughs.[82]

When asked for whom he writes, Godfrey once answered, "Margaret Laurence."[83] On its dustjacket, she strongly praised The New Ancestors, urging us to read it.

Godfrey's novel is an enormous undertaking. As

[80] Dave Godfrey, Interviewed by Graeme Gibson, Eleven Canadian Novelists, p. 163.

[81] Dave Godfrey, The New Ancestors (Toronto: New Press, 1970), p. 253.

[82] Ibid., p. 212.

[83] Gibson, Eleven Canadian Novelists, p. 166.

he points out, it has many levels of meaning, the deepest of which can only be understood when one knows the meanings of all the African dialect references. It deals with a later period of Africa than Laurence's work, that is with Micere Mugo's fourth category of post-independence corruption and neo-colonialism, of revolution: "I wanted to really show what an African society revolution was like."[84] Like Laurence, Godfrey felt that by distancing himself in the form of Michael Brudener, he could communicate what he had to say. The message comes out loud and clear amidst the emotional anguish in the novel. It is a much more cerebral work than Laurence's, and much more a political story. Laurence deals far more with the feelings of the people and not with the leaders of change, as Godfrey does: "the anti-neoimperialism catechism: 'Your black Redeemer has brought you to the kingdom of dust and poverty.'"[85]

As in Laurence's work, there is a great deal of religious imagery; the structure is a religious framework. And there are mixed black/white relationships, which produce children like Delicacy, whose father was a Canadian sailor.

[84] Ibid., p. 162.

[85] Dave Godfrey, The New Ancestors, p. 81.

Michael is a biology teacher. He says of the English: "Bloody, foolish imperialistic, mind-warping rot . . . You must seek questions."[86] and "we are all learning savages . . . all about is jungle, darkness; as much for you as for me. But first attempt to study yourself and your ancestors."[87]

Godfrey is obsessed with the theory of the redistribution of energy, a popular socialist application of physics. This runs through the novel almost as counterpoint.

The New Ancestors is violent, complex; it depicts inner and outer torture in the quest for personal and national freedom. This is the same vision as Laurence's, one of freedom, but the details are different.

Another novel about Africa by a Canadian is David Knight's Farquharson's Physique and What it Did to His Mind. Knight also went to Africa to teach. His book is about Nigeria between 1965 and 1966. It deals with the tribal strife between Ibo and Yoruba, but it is also about Farq, his fears, his search. It is a cleverly-written book where the minor characters are one-dimensional, each a dimension of Farquharson himself:

86 Ibid., p. 155.

87 Ibid., p. 160.

Jamie represents fear, Joan is order and repression, Gail is her opposite.

The sexual imagery throughout is connected to Fanon's theory about the fallacies of genital differences between Black and White. Farquharson is like a black man, and he becomes more and more so, so that he, like the Ibo, is killed for tribal reasons.

Knight's novel is set in stage four of African evolution/revolution according to Mugo's classifications. The action revolves around internal corruption. The lectures given by Professor Farquharson parallel the political and inner freedom motif. The lectures move from love to freedom to tragedy, or in Blakean terms, from innocence through experience.

Farquharson is in exile from Canada, from his wife, from his dead child, and from his body.

Knight, like Laurence, depicts white people as pale, "the peeled people." Mugo claims this is to depict imperialists "as essentially coming from sick communities."[88] Joan is an imperialist. To her, Africa is unclean. She says that "it isn't a joke to have Africans looking at you."[89] Like Cora with her brocades in

[88]Micere Githae-Mugo, "Visions of Africa," p.150.

[89]David Knight, Farquharson's Physique: and What it Did to His Mind (London: Hodder, 1971), p. 279.

Laurence's This Side Jordan, Joan "held the gold and white satin against herself and spun about, dancing in her own African house."[90] Farq's cloth is brick red and there are mounds of it in the African way.

Farquharson fears death in the sense that it will negate him. In the end, his death is violent, in the name of brotherhood to his "fellow" Ibo. He chooses a side. Jamie is in the same position. He is fought over by Joan and Farq. Farq controls his fear of death and hence overcomes it, finds inner peace. But "Jamie didn't cry"[91] and the ring is passed on, the ring of freedom, of Africa. Joan hates Farq because he has passed on his vision of freedom; he has won.

Laurence wrote a review of Knight's book for the Journal of Canadian Fiction. She praises the book for "a tremendous sense of authenticity."[92] At the end of the review she affirms her own mirror experi-

[90] Ibid., p. 286.

[91] Ibid., p. 477.

[92] Margaret Laurence, "African Experience". A Review of Farquharson's Physique by David Knight. Journal of Canadian Fiction, I, 1 (Winter, 1972), p. 77.

ence as well as Knight's and Godfrey's:

> At one point, Farquharson observes of the expatriates that 'Africa was the place they all lived beside'. This was true and yet he found himself strangely drawn in. Innocence had to go. And Experience, for him the African experience, turned out to be a mirror, as it has for so many others. If you look closely, you may see both the slave-master and the slave, both the murderer and the victim. Farquharson looked. And couldn't look away.[93]

From books of Africa we turn to those of Canada, and Rudy Wiebe's The Temptations of Big Bear which Laurence calls "the best reconstruction of the Indian's side of the uprising" (HS 209). Patricia Morley wrote of Wiebe that his "feeling for the land as a *living* thing permits the empathy with Indian attitudes that one finds in The Temptations of Big Bear."[94]

Wiebe was born in Saskatchewan in 1934, of Russian emigrants, who were driven out of Russia from their farmland. They were religious Mennonites, a sect which Morley describes as "a religious nation without a country," like the Jews.[95] Wiebe describes the change from farming to pouring concrete which his father went through although he never learned to drive a car.[96] This is

[93] Ibid., p. 78.

[94] Patricia Morley, The Comedians: Hugh Hood and Rudy Wiebe (Toronto: Clarke, Irwin, 1977), p. 10.

[95] Ibid., p. 6.

[96] Rudy Wiebe, "Passage by Land," The Narrative Voice, ed. Metcalf, p. 258.

revelant because it shows the change from the land to technology in Wiebe's background. And this is the essence of The Temptations of Big Bear, The Scorched-Wood People, and "Where is the Voice Coming From", representing the voices of the ancestors as in Laurence's African work.

Wiebe is a very religious writer, less overtly so in The Temptations than in the later story of Riel. But the parallels between the wandering Israelites and the Indians, and of Louis David Riel and the biblical David, are similar to Laurence's alignment of Somalis and Israelites and, later, of Ghanians and Métis. The land is essential; man and nature are one. Wiebe's masterful images and word pictures repeatedly show this. At the last Buffalo hunt, Big Bear "lay against the ground completely, and the earth warmth grew in him and slowly each sound and movement and colour and whispy smell of the living world worked in him."[97] The railway camp of Regina is placed Where the Bones Lie. How similar this is to Laurence's "The Tomorrow-Tamer," where the bridge requires digging up the ancestral grove. At the end of his trial, Big Bear, knowing all will be lost,

[97] Rudy Wiebe, The Temptations of Big Bear (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1973), p. 127.

thinks to himself, "he was sick looking at why they gathered here on the beautiful world. No joy, no joy."[98] No grace, no freedom.

The reservations are seen not as protection and preservation, but as prisons, as cages by Big Bear. The battle is still the same ninety-five years later as we shall see in Kinsella's more modern setting.

Wiebe's latest novel, The Scorched-Wood People, is about the Métis and their vision of freedom. The book concentrates on the Métis prophet, Louis David Riel, whose voice was like that "of some Cree orator generations past."[99] Wiebe powerfully brings out the mystic who was Riel, the fiery temperament both temporal and divine. Wiebe reuses phrases such as "strange power" and "foaming" at the mouth like a mad dog to constantly remind us of Riel's emotional pitch. Sara Riel and her brother shared a divine love, and Wiebe beautifully transfers the flesh to the divine in their interchanges. As Riel awaits his execution, he realizes "the prophet must die to reveal his ultimate vision."[100]

Gabriel Dumont is granted the lesser role in this

[98] Ibid., p. 185.

[99] Rudy Wiebe, The Scorched-Wood People (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1977), p. 27.

[100] Ibid., p. 330.

book, that of keeping the faith despite his own convictions. He is the man of action rather than of contemplation, a perfect foil for Riel, and one of the few who believed Riel was sane because he had witnessed the intensity of his faith.

There are interesting parallels between Wiebe's and Laurence's sympathetic attitude towards the Métis, although Laurence has never overtly dwelt on history or politics in her work as both Wiebe and Godfrey do.[101]

W.P. Kinsella was born in Edmonton in 1935, but he now lives in Victoria. He is a free-lance journalist, poet, and story writer. Dance Me Outside is his first book, a collection of short stories. It is very close to The Tomorrow-Tamer in black comedy; however, like A Bird in the House, it is almost a loosely-structured novel in that the same characters reappear and the narrator, Silas Ermineskin, fluctuates in age from about ten to twenty-two in the book, although most of the stories are written while he is taking a course for mechanics.

It seems at first what Laurence called 'the fami-

[101] cf. Margaret Laurence, "Ivory Tower or Grassroots?: The Novelist as socio-political being", p. 25: "Fiction has many facets . . . For myself, it encompasses both history and belief, both social and spiritual themes. It speaks first and foremost of individual characters, and through them it speaks of our dilemmas and our aspirations, which are always in some way or other those of both politics and of faith."

liar story' of whiteman versus Indian. But it is not. Some of the episodes are very funny in the total lack of communication between White and Indian. The white world is seen in all its ridiculous trappings and bureaucracy, constantly concerned with the way things should be done. Although the whites are definitely the imperialists and the Indians the victims in society, in the stories the victims are often the Whites who are seen in their own cages. In other words the Indian is the meadowlark; his society can teach us, as Laurence says.

There are many direct comparisons to Laurence's stories. What happens to Winnie Bear and Pauline in "Butterflies" is a reversal of Piquette and Vanessa in "The Loons". Winnie is a white girl who wants to be like an Indian. In the end, she becomes like Piquette, doped beyond hope. "Between" points up the transition between old and new ways in the same way as "A Fetish for Love". A story like "Ups and Downs" is superficially very amusing about a prize trip to Las Vegas. However the total misunderstandings, the aura of Vegas is not funny at all. In fact, most of the stories border on black comedy. The stories emerge as art, not propaganda or didacticism.

Like Laurence, Kinsella often builds a story around a single idea or symbol. One of the best, I think, is "Horse Collars". There are yellow, bright yellow collars on the horses of Wilbur Yellowknees, whose daughters work for him as prostitutes. The horses also have red ribbons as do Wilbur and daughter Celina. Silas once has to lead the horses home, and he realizes: "I never notice before how skinny the horses are and they walk always with their heads down. The pretty yellow horse collars are hard when you touch them and there are big sores on the necks where those collars rub."[102] Celina wears a yellow sweater and sits rigid in the wagon, her face sore and beaten.

I include George Woodcock's biography <u>Gabriel Dumont: The Métis Chief and His Lost World</u> in the discussion because Woodcock's feelings about the Métis are the same as Laurence's:

> The destruction of the Métis culture represents something in our new world of Canada emerging into nationhood that a century afterwards, we cannot finally and wholly accept. In this way, while Riel's own will was rooted in the past, his involuntary destiny belonged to the future that in Canada to-day has become our present, the present in which the disinherited whom Riel still symbolically represents - the Métis, the Indians, the French Canadians, the Doukhobors, the minorities in general - rise up against the very world that defeated Riel and his past.[103]

[102] W.P. Kinsella, <u>Dance Me Outside</u> (Ottawa: Oberon, 1977), p. 33.

[103] George Woodcock, <u>Gabriel Dumont: The Métis Chief and his Lost World</u> (Edmonton: Hurtig, 1975), p. 9.

Woodcock certainly places the blame for the anger of the Métis on the shoulders of an ignoring Sir John A. Macdonald. He says it is "surprising and reprehensible when one remembers that he himself, a Highlander one generation removed, belonged by ancestry to the clans that at Culloden stood in defense of a primitive culture against a complex civilization in the same way as Gabriel Dumont and his people were preparing to stand."[104] This same parallel is the one we see in Laurence's work between Africans, Métis, and Highlanders.

What became of Dumont as a showman is a fact but also a symbol of man's inhumanity to man. One remembers Laurence's Godman; one remembers cowboy/Indian shows. One understands the message. Woodcock, as Laurence says, "enables us to repossess a crucial part of our past."[105]

Common to Laurence, Wiebe, Kinsella, Godfrey, and Woodcock is the enormous impact of the cult of the ancestors. Laurence claims there are two types of ancestors: the immediate family ones and those that belong to our historical past. Hence she calls Dumont one of her ancestors because she has absorbed his way of life into hers (HS 21).

[104] Ibid., p. 127.

[105] Margaret Laurence quoted on back cover of George Woodcock's Gabriel Dumont: The Métis Chief and his Lost World.

All these writers use the "voices of ancestors" in their work. Laurence wrote "The Voices of Adamo" around this concept; Kinsella has the larksong, "voice of summer-bird". Wiebe is fascinated with Big Bear's voice and the message of the story "Where is the Voice Coming From". Woodcock and Wiebe both mention often the voice of Gabriel Dumont as deep and loud. Laurence uses this voice as a warning in her essay "Man of our People":

> Has the voice of Gabriel anything to tell us here and now, in a world totally different from his? I believe it has. The spirits of Dumont and Riel, of Big Bear and Poundmaker, after the long silence, are speaking once again through their people, their desoendants. Will we ever reach a point when it is no longer necessary to say Them and Us? Canadians . . . must hear native people's voices and ultimately become part of them, for they speak not only of the soul-searing injustices done to them but also of their re-discovered sense of self-worth and their ability to tell and teach the things needed to be known . . . Those other societies which existed before imperialism, mass exploitation, and commercial greed were certainly far from ideal, nor can we return to them, but they knew about living in relationship to the land, and they may ultimately be the societies from whose values we must try to learn (<u>HS</u> 212).

Godfrey's very title, <u>The New Ancestors</u>, suggests voices of present and past, and his style is an oral one. He claims his interest in ancestors stems from his Welsh background; Wiebe attributes his to his Mennonite origins. Laurence has said often that her background as a Scot, a Presbyterian, and a child of the depression has affected

her writing.

Common to most of the Canadian writers discussed is a religious framework around which the stories build. This is true of Laurence, Wiebe, Godfrey, and Knight. The land is of great importance to all these authors. Technology is out of touch with living things. The biblical myth and the reapplication of it as desert, "jungle," and prairie is a decidedly Canadian trait, as discussed in Chapter Three of this thesis.

Without exception, all these writers are empathetic with native peoples and scorn those who are not. All white Canadians are originally displaced people; is this what makes them sympathetic to dispossessed natives? This is not entirely so, or then John A. Macdonald might have been more tolerant. It is rather, I suppose, that the Prospero/Caliban psychology works in us all, and those who choose to write of freedom are unable to be masters. They tend to "go native," like Farquharson in Knight's novel.

Various comments have been made by critics which show that Laurence is considered a valid spokesman for the feelings of ordinary people during the Independence of Ghana. The Kenyan critic Micere Mugo said that the world needed more Western writers like Laurence. Anthony Babalow, a Ghanian student at the University of

British Columbia, reviewed <u>This Side Jordan</u>: "all told, the novel not only makes very interesting reading, but also gives the reader a highly informed insight into Africa to-day."[106] Ibrahim Tahir in <u>West Africa</u> was equally complimentary, saying that Laurence understood that "the basic human truths"[107] were true of Africans. And her fellow-Canadian David Godfrey, said of her: "I am here in Africa to be properly amazed by the accuracy of her perceptions and conclusions."[108]

Downey claims her hopeful, optimistic endings about Africa were wrong, but misses the fact that Laurence was in Africa before Independence actually occurred. Interestingly, Woodcock criticized <u>The Tomorrow-Tamer</u>, saying it sounded translated, and that he found the book as a whole "incompletely satisfying".[109] Kildare Dobbs wrote a scalding review about <u>This Side Jordan</u> in which he said that Canadians were unqualified to write about Africans. Rudy Wiebe has since retaliated in an article published

[106] Anthony Babalow, A Review of <u>This Side Jordan</u>. <u>British Columbia Library Quarterly</u>, 25 (July, 1961), p. 34.

[107] Ibrahim Tahir, "Anthropological Curiosity". <u>West Africa</u> (Nov. 9, 1963), p. 1273.

[108] Dave Godfrey, "For Bonfires/For Burning". A Review of <u>The Tomorrow-Tamer</u>. <u>The Tamarack Review</u>, 33 (Autumn, 1964), p. 92.

[109] George Woodcock, "Jungle and Prairie". <u>Canadian Literature</u>, 45 (Summer, 1970), p. 84.

last year; he claims that four English critics, Dobbs included, think that "I should be writing about things that really count and not native peoples at all. These critics would like it if Canadian writers wrote about the English countryside and the coast of Ireland."[110]

Maybe that is the clue. Canadians write of the quest for freedom because it is obvious to them where it may not be to writers from the Mother Country. And for those who happened to have the African experience, wilderness or jungle, the situation there was even more obvious. And so the African mirror reflected Canada and their inner selves.

In a recent article on Laurence's stories, Patricia Morley commented that Laurence's writing "wears well".[111] It expands with rereading. It is a tribute only to Laurence's great talent, that after many readings of her work, there is newness and excitement in her books.

Her message is of individual freedom. She does not think "that real liberation comes from turning your back on your whole past or on your ancestral past.

[110] Rudy Wiebe, "The Canadian". The Montreal Gazette (Feb. 26, 1977), p. 10.

[111] Patricia Morley, "The long trek home: Margaret Laurence's Stories", p. 26.

Rather it comes through coming to some kind of terms with it, knowing that there is a certain amount of mental baggage."[112]

Laurence's message is conveyed through the use of biblical myth where she uses the Israelites' exile and wandering as a metaphor for inner wanderings and individual exile. Another layer is added by her African experience where she links Somalis and Ghanians by the same exodus-millennium myth, with their various tribal societies and outer and inner struggles for freedom. Finally added to this structure is the prairie wilderness with the nomadic Indians and Métis. Her concern is always the same; the novels and stories become thus a multidimensional collage which begins with one individual, Laurence or perhaps one of her created characters, and then builds layer upon layer until the overall picture is a universal vision of freedom.

Characterization is Laurence's main interest. She is amazingly perceptive and has a unique ability to get inside the minds and even the skins of her characters. Hence the psychological motivations

[112] Gibson, Eleven Canadian Novelists, p. 203.

of her heroes and heroines are of paramount importance. She credits Mannoni's Prospero and Caliban with helping her to understand the psychology of colonization. I have read and made use of this and other studies such as Fanon's Black Skin, White Masks in an effort to better understand not only Laurence's characters but also her reasons for creating them as she has.

Finally, in reading Laurence's work, I became interested in the fact that her work was usually compared with that of either Nigerians such as Achebe, or with English writers such as Joyce Carey or Joseph Conrad. I began to place her work rather with that of other Canadians who had been to Africa or had written of Indians or Métis. All are concerned with exile, oppression, and, finally, with personal freedom.

In conclusion, I should like to quote from two poets who were also warriors. In "The Poem and the Spear," Laurence reminds us of the close parallels between Mohamed Abdullah Hassan and Louis David Riel, both men of their people. Their writings are the best summary of Laurence's vision. "To a Friend Going on a Journey," by Abdullah Hassan,

was quoted by Laurence in three of her works:

> Now you depart, and though your way may lead
> Through airless forests thick with 'hhagar' trees,
> Places steeped in heat, stifling and dry,
> Where breath comes hard, and no fresh breeze
> can reach -
> Yet may God place a shield of coolest air
> Between your body and the assailant sun.
>
> And in a random scorching flame of wind
> That parches the painful throat, and sears
> the flesh,
> May God, in His compassion, let you find
> The great-boughed tree that will protect
> and shade.
>
> On every side of you, I now would place
> Prayers from the Holy Qoran, to bless your path
> That ills may not descend, nor evils harm,
> And you may travel in the peace of faith.[113]

And from Riel's diary when he was released from St. Jean de Dieu:

> and if anyone speaks to me of the Métis, those poor people in their land clean and beautiful as paradise hounded by Orange fanaticism, of those brave hunters they call savages who are of my bone, of my faith, who again and again chose me as their leader . . . if the sacred cause of the Métis reclaims me, could I, their brother, refuse them my life, my blood?[114]

This thesis affirms that Laurence's vision is universal, that her African and Canadian work should be viewed as parallel statements of the same basic concern for freedom of the individual. Following an introduc-

[113] Mohamed Abdullah Hassan quoted in A Tree For Poverty, selected by Margaret Laurence (Hamilton: rpt. McMaster University Press, 1970), p. 36. Cf. Heart of a Stranger, p. 75, and The Prophet's Camel Bell, p. 193.

[114] Rudy Wiebe, The Scorched-Wood People, p. 167.

tion, I have defined the nature of freedom in Laurence's African works, showing the way this recurs in her books set in Canada. I have discussed the Bible and Mannoni's treatise as the main influences on Laurence's concept of freedom, and have placed her work in the context of Canadians writing about Africans or native Canadians.

Of her first journey to Somaliland, Laurence said that "the strangest glimpses you may have of any creature in the distant lands will be those you catch of yourself" (PCB 1). Laurence's African mirror shows Canadians to themselves.

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