

A Synoptical Appreciation of Moteane Melamu's Botswana Short Stories

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Abstract

This article is an appreciation of five of Melamu's short fictional pieces. It shows how the selected stories depict life in Botswana. All the stories discussed are set in Gaborone. They offer glimpses of urban life in domestic spaces, political arenas, the streets and neighbourhoods. The stories feature a variety of fallible characters with different traits, anxieties and foibles. The discussion shows how the characters act and interact in the particular circumstances they find themselves in. The stories attest to Melamu's prowess as a storyteller.

Keywords Botswana; Melamu; urban life; domestic spaces; storyteller

Introduction

This essay presents the nuts and bolts of five of Moteane Melamu's short stories set in Gaborone, Botswana. The discussion pays attention to the specific details of the short fictional pieces and underscores their significance and value. It demonstrates how the selected short stories offer witty insights and ironic perspectives on various aspects of life in post-independence Botswana. The stories are conveyed in narrative voices that are characterised by perceptive observation, empathetic understanding and humane wisdom. The stories are delivered in lucid, elegant and serviceable prose, each word meticulously chosen and slotted neatly with other words. The short stories attest to Melamu's considerable skills as a raconteur with a lithe and delicate touch.

The discussion, in a celebratory vein, is a synoptic inventory of narrative resources marshalled in Melamu's short stories to recreate the protean conditions of everyday life in Botswana's capital city, Gaborone. The stories depict slices of urban life in the domestic spaces, political arenas, the streets, churches, bars, modest neighbourhoods and affluent addresses of a small but rapidly growing capital city. The stories feature a variety of fallible characters with improprieties, anxieties, fears and foibles.

This write-up examines the assemblage and activation of fictional technology in the short stories and shows how such mechanisms and manoeuvres offer memorable and shrewdly satirical descriptions of how a variety of characters act and interact, given the people they are and in the particular settings and circumstances they find themselves in.

'The Candidate'

The earliest short story set in Gaborone is titled 'The Candidate'. It is featured in the collection of short stories, *Children of Twilight* (1996). The story is an exposé of the exploits of a crooked Gaborone politician. It is a satirical depiction of the fall into disgrace of Ditlhoriso Mogale, a degenerate political operator with a mentality of a huckster. It focalises the collapse of the duplicitous house of cards that is the life of Ditlhoriso Mogale as the tarnished politician is emphatically rejected by the electorate at the Council ward polls. Only 45 people cast votes for him while the winning candidate garners 2300 votes.

In addition to electoral loss, Mogale's underhand dealings catch up with him. He has to

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contend with a court summons for embezzlement of public funds and further legal action against him in relation to a deceitful scheme in which he duped members of his constituency to pay him a road levy on a monthly basis. As the full might of the law descends on him, Dithloriso Mogale hurls curses at the counterfeit traditional doctor he paid in vain to fend off his troubles.

Dithloriso Mogale, born in the village of Ramotswa, spent fifteen years working in Johannesburg where he acquired his sneaky habits. During his Johannesburg days, Mogale would visit Ramotswa at Christmas time bearing all sorts of illicitly procured goodies and treats. He ingratiated himself with the villagers by showering all and sundry with flashy trinkets and presenting himself as a manager at one of the sizeable factories in Johannesburg. He plied elderly males with alcoholic beverages. The joy and merry of these annual festivities endeared him to local people who celebrated him as a charitable local boy doing well for himself.

In 1966, the year the country attained independence, Mogale returns to Botswana. He settles in Extension 14, a locality of Gaborone, where he builds a house befitting a 'manager' who has worked in the City of Gold. Mogale comports himself as a knowledgeable and worldly-wise man well-acquainted with the intricate affairs of the modern world. He always made it a point to remind those who cared to listen to him that he once lived large in Johannesburg, or 'Emshishi, 'Emazweni', as he prefers to put it. He also established a reputation as a man who is particular about sartorial finery, always nattily dressed.

Mogale contests and wins a council seat in Ward 19, a working-class constituency. He triumphs at the polls because he strongly advocated for lower rates and rents, a position that was economically untenable though it appealed to the voters. He is elected Chairman of the Council on the basis of his dapper manner of dress. His elevated political status makes him more ravenous for regard. He adopts pretentious mannerisms. His vanity causes him to wear woollen three-piece suits in the scorching Gaborone weather. He develops a particular obsession with English tie-knots. He fancies himself as the city 'Mayor' and demands mayoral benefits and privileges. His council colleagues rebuff such pompous overtures. He expends his energy in trying to mimic British mannerisms and obsessing with anything and everything British. He pays more attention to his wardrobe, his extramarital affairs and fraudulent schemes rather than delivering on the promises he made to the electorate. Avarice drives him to embezzle council funds and submit fraudulent claims to the council treasurer for trips that he never made. He speaks a ludicrous version of Tswana-English, a concoction of grammatically indecorous English phrases peppered with nuggets of 'tsotsi taal' vulgarities that he picked during his Johannesburg sojourn as illustrated in the excerpt below:

Sies! How can a moegoe ya Motswana take me, the owner of Gaborone, to court? Who he thinks is he? He is not knowing me, Mogale. He'll learn me, the fool (Melamu 1996:75).

Dithloriso Mogale is the prototype of corrupt politicians whose interest is in self-enrichment and self-entrenchment in position of power and authority. Neglecting the pressing problems affecting his constituency he conducts a transactional affair with his similarly duplicitous and pretentious office secretary. He spends time concocting scams and fraudulent schemes. His term in office is characterised by ineptitude. His colleagues lose confidence in him and the constituents cry foul. Given his dismal performance, his prospects of re-election are unpromising. He makes frantic eleventh hour moves to retain a position he considers a 'birth right.' In a panicky bid to fend off his impending political demise, Mogale resorts to seeking the services of Sipanja, a popular traditional doctor, visiting from Zimbabwe, who claimed:

that he could make childless women have children, bring back wayward husbands to their wives and families, provide unlucky young ladies with love potions and give people charms to make them successful in anything and everything (Melamu 1996:77).

Sipanja gives Mogale herbal potions with which to fortify himself against the hardships of life and the rigours of the forthcoming election. After performing his rituals Mogale shows up in the dining room emitting a nauseating stench. He takes exception when his spouse Dikeledi complains about the foul odour that he would rather not account for. Sipanja also instructs Mogale to abstain from intimacy with his spouse in the run up to the elections. The stench of ritual concoctions fortuitously becomes an excuse for Mogale to spend nights sleeping in the living room. Mogale who reeks of occult potions is the same person who in an earlier domestic tiff with his spouse pretends to shun traditional doctors:

Dikeledi, how many times I must be telling you that I'm not wanting for mixing myself up with di-wish doctors? And this time mus' be finish this talking for the wish-doctors, you're understanding me? (Melamu 1996:67).

Sipanja's charms prove ineffective when Mogale stages a ludicrous pre-election rally that ends on a farcical note. Mogale turns himself into a laughing stock when he waffles throughout his speech and eventually loses his composure as the rally descends into chaos. He was even heckled by the people he had bribed to attend his rally. His comical mixture of Setswana and snippets of English does little to restore his respectability and political credibility.

As I 'm being like this, I was use to belonging mo-diorganizing at Gouteng. As a manner of which, dipolotiki is the things I am understanding very too much...I am want to represent you' (Melamu 1996:82).

'The Candidate' offers the reader a caricature of a corrupt and inept politician. The story cautions against political folly. It alerts the reader to the antics of swindlers who continue to find their way into political office.

'Betrayal'

'Betrayal', included in a collection titled *Living and Partly Living* (1996), is a story of marital infidelity and the deleterious effects of wagging tongues. In this story the upshots of marital unfaithfulness are further acerbated by rumour-mongering. The story chronicles the ascendance and tragic end of Thapelo Molosiwa who commits suicide by drowning himself in Gaborone Dam. Thapelo Molosiwa, born and raised in Peleng, a working-class section of the town of Lobatse, is a person on the rise, an eminent economist and notable financial advisor in the Ministry of Finance and Development Planning who graduated with a first-class degree from the University of Botswana in 1982. At thirty-four, his future in the public service appears bright. Thapelo's father, Rathedi, gives his drinking mates a horrid time by constantly bragging about his son's achievements.

Thapelo is happily married to Difiedile, a tutor at the National Health Institute. Marital bliss evaporates when Difiedile goes to George Washington University in Washington DC to further her studies, taking the couple's daughter with her. Things go awry when Molosiwa meets and conducts

an affair with Dimakatso Mosoeu, a political refugee from Soweto, South Africa. Twelve months after their chance meeting, Dimakatso passes out at Gaborone Club while Molosiwa is attending a meeting in Harare. Dimakatso is admitted at Princess Marina Hospital's Intensive Care Unit where she dies of liver cancer after laying comatose for two months. All this time Molosiwa does not go anywhere near the hospital in order to avoid raising suspicions about his association with Dimakatso.

Molosiwa grieves secretly for Dimakatso. He attends a memorial service, held at the Anglican Cathedral of the Holy Cross before Dimakatso's body is transported to South Africa for burial. As Molosiwa leaves the memorial service, he overhears a group of women nonchalantly chatting about how Dimakatso died of AIDS. The scandalmongers also broach the issue of her secret affair with Difiedile's spouse who works for the Ministry of Finance and Development Planning. On hearing that his secret life is in the public domain, Molosiwa, plunges into a state of depression. When Difiedile comes back to Botswana after completing her studies, she immediately notices that her spouse is distracted. When rumours of Thapelo's secret affair with Dimakatso reach her, she decides to leave the marital home. She asks Thapelo to go for medical test to establish his health status. Thapelo lacking courage to go for a test, begins to look haggard. His performance at work goes downhill. He submits lacklustre reports. He absents himself from work and takes to drinking. It is already too late when Difiedile finds out from a doctor colleague who attended to Dimakatso that she died of liver cancer. By then her spouse's body had been spotted floating in Gaborone Dam. The story is a tragic case of a proficient official bungling his private and familial affairs.

The story dramatically illustrates ways in which gossip and rumours circulate in workplaces, in homes, at funerals and other social gatherings as social currency. The narrative pinpoints one particular nest of rumour-mongering, Gaborone Club, a hangout patronised by the elite in the capital, As the story's narrator intimates:

If you wanted to know about everything that was going on in the city, from the imminent civil service promotions to the most intimate bedroom secrets of others; you just had to join the Club. When people spoke of "Radio Mall" they knew nothing about the efficiency of 'Radio Gaborone Club'. Here characters were made or unmade; promising careers came to ruin and marriages destroyed with simple gossip-monger's favourite gambit, 'Have you heard?'" (Melamu 1996:7).

'No Game for Boys'

'No Game for Boys', also featured in *Living and Partly Living* (1996), portrays the bumbling and fumbling of Simon Serule, an ineffectual character whose tactless gambles and irresponsible associations result in him being arrested for the murder of his own nephew. Simon Serule is a disgraced former Chief Immigration Officer who was summarily dismissed from his job for illegally issuing residence permits for a fee. He has a cattle post, a house in town and is married to Agnes who works as a Nursing Sister at the Council Clinic in Old Naledi. The couple has no children. Agnes who has done everything possible to bear a child, including taking fertility tests the results of which attest that there is nothing wrong with her reproductive capacities. She keeps asking Simon to go for medical tests but her spouse is reluctant to ascertain his fertility status. He is content with blaming his spouse for their inability to bear a child. Simon spends a great deal of time hanging out at Notwane Club with his bachelor friend called Ike.

Simon's drinking cronies persuade him to run for election as an independent candidate in the upcoming general elections. He is to contest for the newly created Gaborone Central Constituency

against two proficient candidates who have the benefit of being sponsored and supported by their respective political parties. Simon's efforts to stage political rallies prove disastrous. The few people who attend his rallies do so in order to heckle and disrupt. The wreckers humiliate him with taunting references to his shady past.

Against all evidence pointing to bleak electoral prospects, Ike goads Simon to pursue alternative means of bolstering his chances of winning the election. One rainy evening, Ike takes Simon to a place in Tsholofelo location where they link up with two dubious characters, Matlheadibona and Kgwanayape. The unkempt Matlheadibona says to an incredulous Simon:

Don't you ever think that these people who become politicians just walk blindly into the whole thing. It's people like me they come to for help... You've got to be a bull of a man to succeed as a politician. You don't just call a meeting and hope people will come and listen to you in their hundreds. They have to be made to attend the meetings. And that is where we, bo-Matlheadibona, come in. We make this happen (Melamu 1996:47).

The long and short of the precipitous and calamitous chain of events that follow is that Simon finds himself involved in a ritual murder. The following morning the mutilated remains of Tefo, the son of Nathaniel who is Simon's brother are found. Matlheadibona's identity card is picked at the crime scene leading to the arrest of the culprits. Simon Serule's imprudent political gamble ends on a tragic note. 'No Game for Boys' draws attention to one of the sore points of contemporary Botswana, ritual murder.

'The First Lady'

The story titled 'The First Lady', also in the collection *Living and Partly Living* (1996), is told from the perspective of Rachel, a domestic help employed by Esther Pholo, the widow of a former diplomat who served as ambassador to the United Kingdom for a couple of years before returning home on account of poor health. Rachel gives a scathing account of the idiosyncrasies of her employer. She expresses disapproval of her pretentious ways and her uppity mannerisms. Rachel who describes herself as a 'poor country girl from Thamaga' is bothered by the way her employer conducts herself (Melamu 1996:106).

Rachel discloses how her 'Madam' lives alone in a palatial five-bedroomed house though no one ever visits her. Rachel uses hyperbole to accentuate Esther Pholo's vanity and extravagance. She approximates the spaciousness of Mma Pholo's kitchen to that of a football pitch and her bedroom, she reckons, needs a taxi to move from one part of the other. Mrs Pholo spends hours in bed or luxuriating in a bath. She devotes inordinate amounts of time to grooming herself though she is hardly goes out. She seeks solace in drinking gin-and-tonic. She spends days rueing how her spouse's tour of duty, and thus their stay in London, was cut short. She ritualistically tries to relive her days in London, wistfully shedding tears as she looks at photographs of her moments in London.

Rachel who worked for the couple in London reports that Mma Pholo spent her days in London living extravagantly. She divulges that her employer went on twice-weekly shopping sprees, buying dresses at pricey and high-end shops in the upmarket section of West End. Rachel intimates that stress and heart ailment that claimed Esther's husband may have been aggravated by her spendthrift ways.

One occasion that Mrs Pholo is obsessed with, long after the fact, is the couple's invitation to a London Symphony Orchestra at Royal Albert Hall. The invitation from Buckingham Palace

coincided with Joseph Pholo's birthday but Esther is too excited about her presence in the company of important people, including the Queen, to consider that. Esther buys an overpriced outfit for the concert, the steep cost of which is borne by her spouse. The symphony concert has a mind-bending effect on her. After the concert she pretends to have developed a taste for classical music, a genre that she previously disliked. She incessantly regales Rachel with details of the Royal Albert Hall concert. She drones on about how the Queen was dressed, who was accompanying her and all related trivia. She constantly nags her spouse to solicit another invitation from Buckingham Palace. Rachel suspects that it is the nagging and the awkward behaviour of his spouse that eventually led to Mr Pholo's demise.

Rachel's fussy employer expects her to clean all the rooms every day, even the unoccupied ones. She fastidiously runs a white-gloved finger over the furniture to ascertain if it has been cleaned. Rachel's spouse is also employed by Mrs Pholo as a chauffeur who also serves as a butler. Every year on the 30th of May, she dressed up in same showy black evening dress that she wore on the occasion of the invitation to the Royal Albert Hall. She insists that her domestic employees escort her, bow to her, serve her and wait upon her as she goes through the ceremony of sitting alone in her living room till late into the night watching a recording of a London Symphony Orchestra performance. She institutes the creepy ritual as an annual event in her house. Rachel regards Mrs Pholo's oddities as symptomatic of a pathological condition.

'The First Lady' is a story that invites the reader to consider issues of esteem, identity, psychic balance and cultural authenticity in the context of a society that is undergoing class differentiation and stratification. It is a mocking account of the affectations, ludicrous routines of a particular member of an emergent affluent class-fraction, as told by a domestic worker who is privy to her employer's behaviour within the confines of her private space. Mrs Pholo, a financially endowed widow with no children of her own, is cast as a socially isolated snob who fritters away her time wallowing in creature comforts and flights of fantasy. Her daily routine is one of loneliness and tedium as she seeks solace in nostalgic memories of her days in London as the spouse of a diplomat.

The story highlights the superciliousness and the vanity that afflicts some elements of the numerically small Botswana elite who have benefitted from foreign travel and a modicum of international exposure. As exemplified by the figure of Mrs Pholo, the deficiencies of this socially atomized and culturally disconnected monetary elite include: class arrogance, self-absorption, lack of modesty, fixation with pompous titles and honorifics, cultural triteness, imitative mannerisms, irrational adoption of foreign vices, desperate social-climbing, and eagerness to be associated with important personages.

'Haunted'

With an air of playfulness, the short story titled 'Haunted' proffers a dramatic account of bizarre occurrences in the Gaborone public transport sphere. The story appears in a collection titled *Baptism of Fire and other Stories* (2010). The story illustrates that Gaborone has its own share of rich and strange scenes. The 'ghost' story raises questions of spectral existence. It recounts how a couple of Gaborone taxi-operators experience fright and shock of a lifetime in encounters with a 'ghostly' passenger. The story offers a glimpse into the life of taxi operators who often have to work awkward hours ferrying all sorts of characters to various destinations in the city.

The setting of the story pays tribute to the city of Gaborone at the turn of the century. It evokes the names of various Gaborone localities and landmarks such as Broadhurst, Bontleng, Extension 14 Cemetery, Princess Marina Hospital, Gaborone Sun, President Hotel, UB roundabout, Jawara Road,

Syringa Hotel, Old Lobatse Road, Extension 12, Bokamoso Junior Community Secondary school and UN Building. This specification of place-names lends the weird story a degree of plausibility and verisimilitude. It is in this seemingly placid and sedate setting that a weird apparition appears to knock people off balance and undermine reason.

Ramasodi, the main character, is a retired taxi operator who served the government for twenty-eight years before venturing into public transport business. He is portrayed as a resourceful, intelligent and hardworking person. He is devoted to his family and is competent in managing his enterprise. He is reputed to be fairly rational and focussed. His level-headed conduct stands out from the stereotypical image of taxi operators as profligate. One hectic afternoon, Ramasodi stops at Gaborone Sun poolside bar for some refreshment and finds a fellow taxi operator called Batho sitting there looking troubled. Ramasodi knew Batho as a usually talkative person but on this particular occasion he is subdued and quiet. After a bit of prodding, Batho tells Ramasodi that he has not gone to work that day because of a terrifying experience he had the previous night. In the excerpt below Batho tries to relate the strange occurrence to his unbelieving friend:

‘Well, Rams, I saw a ghost last night’, Batho announced to his incredulous friend.

‘Are you crazy, Batho?’

‘No, Rams, I’m in complete control of my senses’.

‘What do you mean you saw a ghost? Things like those are the figment of a diseased mind’. Ramasodi tried to reason with Batho.

‘No, my friend, you’re wrong. I tell you I saw a ghost with these two eyes of mine. Only last night’.

‘You are joking, man’.

‘No, I’m not. I actually had the ghost sitting in my taxi as a passenger. Why do you think I’ve not worked today? I am shit scared, Rams’ (Melamu 2010:59).

Ramasodi finds it difficult to believe what Batho is telling him. He wonders about his friend’s sanity. He can tell that there is something bothering Batho but he does not buy the ghost story. Ramasodi dismisses Batho’s spooky tale as nonsensical. He thinks his friend is going through a bout of craziness. He remains unconvinced when Batho tells him that at 11:00 p.m. the previous night as he drove along Jawara Road he encountered a frightening apparition, a tall figure dressed in a white gown. According to Batho the creature had large glowing eyes. It also had bits of cotton wool sticking out of its ears and nostrils. It spoke in weird guttural tones. Batho tells his friend how in a terrible mixture of curiosity and petrification, he felt compelled to stop and let the ghostly figure get into his car. The scary figure ordered him to stop at the cemetery in Bontleng and refused to pay the fare.

While Ramasodi dismisses Batho’s ghost story, he is reminded of his own abiding fear of corpses. His memory races back to a life-threatening incident he experienced years ago. Ramasodi remembers how one rainy day he was offered a lift from Lobatse to Gaborone on an open truck that was transporting a coffin. Ramasodi was not aware that another hitch-hiker was inside the coffin where he sheltered from the rain. When at some point in the journey, the person inside the coffin opened the lid to check whether it had stopped raining, Ramasodi flung himself off the moving truck.

Batho tells Ramasodi that as soon as the ‘ghost’ alighted, he sped to his home in Gaborone West. Members of his family could tell that he must have seen something overwhelming but they also found it hard to believe his tale. He is visibly terrified and emotionally unhinged but the story

he shared was improbable. Just like members of Batho's family, Ramasodi refuses to accept Batho's story. Ramasodi laughs his friend out of court saying that such a thing will never happen to him.

Three weeks after dismissing Batho's 'ghost' story as implausible Ramasodi encounters the same frightening figure that Batho told him about as he drives home late at night after dropping passengers off. The apparition gets into his car and orders him to drive towards Bontleng cemetery where it alights without paying for the trip and fades into the darkness of the night. The terrified Ramasodi speeds to his home in Extension 12 where he tells his incredulous spouse, Masego, that he has seen a ghost. Masego reminds Ramasodi that he laughed at Batho when he related his encounter with a ghost. Masego notices how shaken her spouse is but she finds it hard to believe his unlikely story.

A couple of weeks after the frightening episode, while having some refreshments at the President Hotels, Ramasodi, spots a man carrying a black plastic bag and realises that he is the person who has been duping them by pretending to be a ghost. The man carrying a black plastic bag is Ramaphoi. Ramaphoi is a sliver-tongued and scrounging lout who sees no point in taking up meaningful work but prefers to move from drinking-hole to drinking hole cadging alcoholic drinks from those gullible enough to listen to his stockpile of far-fetched tales. Ramaphoi, in order to impress fellow bar-patrons, regales them with tantalising stories of how he ingeniously gets taxi operators to get him where he wants to go without paying. He brags about how he cryptically makes taxi operators ferry him to his dwelling place without charge.

Ramasodi, Batho and another taxi operator called Tim devise a plan to trap their tormentor. At 10.45 p.m, Ramasodi drives to the spot where he previously picked the 'ghost' hoping that Ramaphoi will repeat his nasty trick. Ramaphoi bites the bait when he predictably appears at the same spot and flags Ramasodi's taxi down. Knowing that his mates are discreetly following his taxi, Ramasodi drives the 'spectre' towards the Bontleng cemetery. When they get to the cemetery, the other taxi drivers surround Ramasodi's taxi and apprehend the culprit. The three taxi operators take their captive to a nearby filling station to have a proper look at him. Ramasodi treats the subdued Ramaphoi, who is sheepishly pleading for mercy, to several slaps and has to be restrained by his colleagues. One of the petrol attendants, called Spuna, recognises Ramaphoi as his wayward cousin and scolds him for shaming the family with his untoward antics. Spuna rebukes Ramaphoi for bragging about his ghoulish escapades. As part of his comeuppance the humiliated miscreant earns himself vicious slaps from a furious Ramasodi and a harsh warning from Batho not to repeat his nasty stunts.

The invocation of spooky incidents suggests that ordinary, mundane and familiar everyday life is ringed with strange and unusual occurrences. The inexplicable continues to challenge perceptions and upset assumptions. Ghostly episodes and psychic phenomena disturb our senses of reality and shake our preconceptions, beliefs and prejudices compelling us to look at the world and ourselves, our places and spaces with fresh eyes. Ghosts are profoundly unnerving and disconcerting because they complicate the difference between life and death. They spook us into considering our mortality. Phantoms induce anxiety and throw the proverbial spanner into the works. The story suggests there is something out of the kilter in the seemingly sedate and tranquil city of Gaborone. The normal, everyday ambience is shadowed and often troubled by frightening episodes. Beneath the façade of serenity lie issues that cry out for attention, seething problems that erupt to disrupt routine activities. The community's moral economy is intermittently subject to upsets and disturbances that indicate concealed or obscured malignancies.

Conclusion

Rendered in a narrative temperament and voice that is markedly worldly, fastidious and perceptive, the stories shed light on how new forms of community and identity are forged, how psychic dispositions are reconfigured and how fresh constellations of values and meanings are conceived as various individual characters in the short stories resort to imperfect antics in their respective attempts to navigate the vagaries of life in Botswana.

What is being celebrated in the stories discussed in this article is the writer's ability to find words, concepts, figures and tropes to mediate between and thread together discrepant aspects of reality in ways that are intelligible and transmissible. The author of the stories is celebrated for bringing his intelligence, his powers of observation, his imaginative prowess, his literary skill to bear in his depiction of life and its complications. What shines through the stories is the author's sense of proportion and sense of the fitness of things. He also uses clear and specific language to bring to life the details that light up the story for the reader, language that is accurate and precisely rendered. The author acquits himself well as a sensitive point of his community, a recorder of mores and experiences of his society and a voice of vision.

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