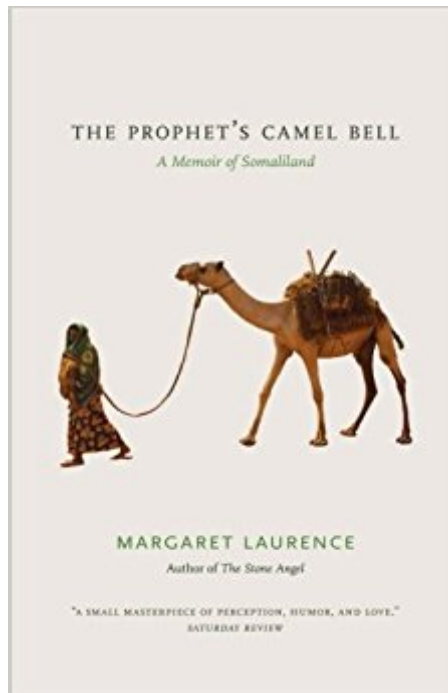




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The Prophet's Camel Bell: A Memoir Of Somaliland



Synopsis

In 1950, as a young bride, Margaret Laurence set out with her engineer husband to what was then Somaliland: a British protectorate in North Africa few Canadians had ever heard of. Her account of this voyage into the desert is full of wit and astonishment. Laurence honestly portrays the difficulty of colonial relationships and the frustration of trying to get along with Somalis who had no reason to trust outsiders. There are moments of surprise and discovery when Laurence exclaims at the beauty of a flock of birds only to discover that they are locusts, or offers medical help to impoverished neighbors only to be confronted with how little she can help them. During her stay, Laurence moves past misunderstanding the Somalis and comes to admire memorable individuals: a storyteller, a poet, a camel-herder. *The Prophet* and *Camel Bell* is both a fascinating account of Somali culture and British colonial characters, and a lyrical description of life in the desert. "The Prophet" and *Camel Bell* has a timeless feeling about it that sets the work quite apart from the usual books of travel and adventure in distant and exotic parts.

• Canadian Literature

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Margaret Laurence (1926–1987) was a well-known Canadian author of short stories and novels, including *The Stone Angel*, *A Jest of God*, *The Diviners*, and *The Fire Dwellers*. In 1972 Laurence was named a Companion of the Order of Canada.

A fascinating memoir. I was enchanted by the lyrical opening paragraph, and read every word to the

end. I had read the author's later novels, and enjoyed hearing her write in this earlier voice.

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