

it is a smile on the face of a mental case
it is sunrays beyond our sorry days
it is simply
poetry

Another way of saying this is that the white poets are more prone to be inspired by painting, by Vermeer (Ian Tromp) or Monet (Metelerkamp) and the black poets by music. Yet another way of saying it is that the white and coloured poets are more likely to be concerned with writing, the black poets with oral performance, although Marechera and Phillip Zhuwao prove the limits of my distinctions by writing about their solitude as poets face to face with ink on the page.

My attempts at classification must be taken for what they are worth: subjective and based on a limited sample, they are no more than sketches of the path followed by poetic consciousness in contemporary South Africa. Clearly, however, we must try to name exactly even as we seek to give these words power by repeating and circulating them.

Neil Ten Kortenaar

Nora Foster Stovel. *Divining Margaret Laurence: A Study of Her Complete Writings*. Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2008. Pp. xii, 406. Paperback CA \$29.95.

Nora Foster Stovel's *Divining Margaret Laurence: A Study of Her Complete Writings* is an excellent addition to the corpus of literature on the renowned Margaret Laurence. Readers will be familiar with Nora Foster Stovel's work on Laurence, for she is, as Barbara Pell notes on the book cover itself, "arguably the pre-eminent Laurence scholar in Canada." Most recently, Stovel has edited new versions of Laurence's *Heart of a Stranger* (2003) and *Long Drums and Cannons* (2001). Stovel unearths some of Laurence's writing in archives—including translations of Somali poems and an essay called "Tribalism as Us Versus Them"—and publishes them as appendices to *Heart of a Stranger*. *Divining Margaret Laurence* intelligently and clearly discusses all of Laurence's writings. Most admirably, in this book, Stovel has once again unearthed—"divined," if you will—Laurence's work, including unpublished writings that have not been discussed previously. These unpublished writings include Laurence's original version of her bestselling novel, *The Diviners*, and her unfinished novel, *Dance on the Earth*.

The book's inclusive structure emphasizes the intimate connections between Laurence's various writings. The book argues that *all* of Laurence's work is valuable and intricately intertwined. The structure is creative and impressive: part one includes a succinct introduction, a critique of Laurence's juvenilia, and a discussion of Laurence's early travel writing in *Heart of a Stranger*. Part two addresses Laurence's diverse writings about Africa. Part three discusses all of the Manawaka fiction, plus the unfinished novel. Part four, called "Endings: 'Full Circle,'" addresses her children's fiction, memoir, and includes a satisfying conclusion. Stovel's discussion of Laurence's African writing is exemplary because full chapters are devoted to works previously downplayed by critics. *A Tree for Poverty*, for example, is very significant because it is the first English translation of Somali poetry and folk literature. In *Long Drums and Cannons*, which pre-dates postcolonial theory, Laurence seeks "to bring the new wealth of Nigerian Literature in English to the attention of Western readers" (108). These works of literature were both out of print for several years. Stovel aptly demonstrates that they are the "most valuable" texts "for a study of how Laurence's Canadian fiction was influenced by her knowledge of African literature" (87). For the first time, in *Divining Margaret Laurence*, readers understand how foundational the African work is. It makes itself ever-present, Stovel points out, throughout the Manawaka cycle and, indeed, in all of Laurence's writings.

Stovel explains that the fictional town of Manawaka—the central and unifying "place" of the Canadian small prairie town—is a "mythical microcosm" (159), based on Laurence's home town of Neepawa, Manitoba. In this way, she joins the African and Canadian writing through an emphasis on the notion of "place" or an understanding of "home." Connected to this notion is Stovel's discussion of landscape, central to most of Canadian literature. Most notably, she highlights Laurence's water imagery: "Consider [Laurence's] use of the river, from the River Jordan to the Wachakwa River, in both her African and Canadian fiction" (161). "Of course," Stovel notes, "the river represents the current of memory that flows through *The Diviners*" (161). She also discusses the Canadian National Railway as an escape from the small prairie town, and she discusses the "place" of the cemetery throughout the Manawaka cycle. Indeed, Stovel explains that "Settings are symbolic in all the Manawaka novels" (214). Both in the introduction to part three, on Laurence's Canadian novels and stories and in the conclusion, Stovel does a remarkable job of connecting symbols, themes, and places in Laurence's writing. In the book's final chapter, arguably the most beautifully written part of the book, Stovel's own narrative, like much of Laurence's work, becomes somewhat metafictional. Stovel thematizes "closure," in the closure of

her own book, as central to Laurence's work. "Laurence ends her Manawaka novels," Stovel asserts, "with a sense of affirmation dramatized by embarkation" (323).

A real strength of *Divining Margaret Laurence* is Stovel's ability to balance her literary criticism with her archival work and knowledge of Laurence's life. Stovel, like Laurence herself, brings together Laurence's fiction and life in this book. This approach allows for some insightful analysis. For example, Stovel discusses the figure of Hagar, from *A Stone Angel*, as both masculine and feminine, demonstrating that Hagar was modeled, in part, after Laurence's grandfather Simpson (177). This method of amalgamating criticism, research, and knowledge of the author's life is most notable in Stovel's discussion of Laurence's original version of *The Diviners*, and in her discussion of the unfinished novel, *Dance on the Earth*. Stovel explains that Laurence cut over one hundred pages from *The Diviners*, at the request of her Knopf editor, Judith Jones. Stovel argues that, since Morag's stories were cut from the book, Laurence's editors might have missed the metafictional aspect of the book. She shows how many of those stories are "pivotal" in Morag's personal life (257). She quite convincingly suggests that the stories within the novel are "missing links," and that the typescript "constitutes a shadow text, haunting *The Diviners*" (263). In the chapter on *Dance on the Earth*, Laurence's unfinished novel, Stovel states that the work would have been a valuable contribution to the Manawaka fiction; indeed, it would have provided closure to the Manawaka cycle: "Both the first and the last of the Manawaka novels, *The Stone Angel* and *The Diviners*, span a long period through flashbacks and historical references, but this unfinished novel was to bring that history into the actual story line through the generations represented by her characters" (270).

Stovel's writing about Laurence's children's texts and Laurence's memoir, *Dance on the Earth*, brings together much of what is addressed throughout *Divining Margaret Laurence*: the influence of Africa and African writing on Laurence's work, the thematizing of the past and the present as one, and the small prairie town as a central place and home. What also becomes clear, throughout the book, but particularly in its latter sections, are Laurence's feminism and spirituality. Stovel says of *The Olden Days Coat*, for instance, that it "reflects the growing feminism evident in her adult fiction, as we see it echoed in the matrilinear lineage and emblem of the story" (298). Laurence's children's Nativity story, *The Christmas Birthday Story*, Stovel explains, "reflects [Laurence's] emphasis, in her adult fiction, on gender equality" (295). In the last chapter of the book, Stovel asserts that Laurence's religion is a feminist Christianity that "desires the recognition of 'the female principle as

part of the Holy Spirit ... the female principle in faith, in art, in all of life” (329). Divining *Margaret Laurence* is indeed a welcome and much needed text. Bringing all of Laurence’s life-work together, the book is engaging and insightful. It pays tribute to one of Canada’s most honorable literary figures.

Laura K. Davis

Bill Schwarz, ed. *Caribbean Literature after Independence: The Case of Earl Lovelace*. London: Institute for the Study of Americas, 2008. pp. xxii, 195. £15.00.

This collection of essays, edited by Bill Schwarz, participates in a recent upsurge in scholarship regarding the works of Earl Lovelace, a Trinidadian writer perhaps best known for his 1979 novel *The Dragon Can’t Dance*. Although Lovelace has achieved sporadic attention from critics throughout the years, Schwarz’s collection, the first book-length study of Lovelace, appears at a time of heightened interest in Lovelace’s oeuvre. This heightened interest is in part a result of the “Lovelace @ 70” celebration and conference organized by the St. Augustine campus of the University of the West Indies. Held amidst the threat of Hurricane Emily in 2005, this series of events, including a production of Lovelace’s *Jestina’s Calypso*, an academic conference and various other celebrations of Lovelace’s seventieth birthday, seems to mark a turning point in the production of Lovelace scholarship, with more and more critics exploring his contributions to Caribbean Literature. Though not associated with the conference, Schwarz’s collection takes a leading role in this increasing conversation which includes various recent dissertations and most especially the Fall 2006 special issue of *Anthurium: A Caribbean Studies Journal* which published selected papers from the “Lovelace @ 70” conference.

What is especially endearing about Schwarz’s collection is the breadth of its content. Schwarz is careful to balance essays which closely read Lovelace’s novels with essays that highlight the cultural context. Kate Quinn’s discussion of Trinidadian cultural policy and publishing industry is an especially useful contribution, while Lawrence Scott’s personal reflection on Lovelace nicely honours Lovelace’s effect on his fellow Trinidadian writers, of whom Scott is one. Although the collection’s main focus is acknowledged to be Lovelace’s novels and short stories to the exclusion of his drama, his writing for children, and his recent collection of essays (*Growing in the Dark*, 2003), this book succeeds adeptly both in furthering criticism on the already well-discussed *The Dragon Can’t Dance* and in drawing attention to Lovelace’s