

mark made by Lessing as she compared her own writing about Africa in *The Golden Notebook* and in her autobiographical prose: "fiction," she asserted, "has it over the [analytic] 'truth' every time" (236).

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Susan J. Warwick. *River of Now and Then: Margaret Laurence's "The Diviners"*. Toronto: ECW Press, 1993. pp. 87.

The question: how does one fit what Henry James called a "loose, baggy monster" of a novel like Margaret Laurence's *The Diviners* into the short, tidy package required for ECW's Canadian Fiction Studies? The answer is provided by Susan Warwick in her reader's guide, *River of Now and Then: Margaret Laurence's "The Diviners"*.

In the first section, entitled "The Importance of the Work," Warwick asserts that "[m]ultiplicity, plurality, inclusiveness" (11) are at the heart of this last novel in Laurence's Manawaka cycle: "Although Laurence's writing as a whole discloses her belief in the connectedness of all existence, it is in *The Diviners* that her commitment to a pluralistic vision of the world is most fully realized" (11). According to Warwick, "*The Diviners* is not a political tract, but it is deeply political in its attention to the plight of the dispossessed, the disadvantaged, and the environment"; it "addresses universal concerns around the issues of race, class, gender, and the environment" (12). Warwick also argues that *The Diviners* is important as a discussion of "the art and craft of fiction itself" (13).

In her brief introduction to the central section of the guide, "A Reading of the Text," Warwick explains that, since the central character, Morag, is a novelist writing a novel that is probably *The Diviners* itself, the text constitutes a metafiction: "all aspects of the novel—in particular its narrative structure, characterization, and patterns of imagery—serve to reinforce the direct statements made by Morag concerning the relation between fact and fiction, between experience and its recreation in words" (19). She adds:

In writing *The Diviners*, Laurence created her most complete, most complex vision of human existence. Here, her previous inquiries into the relations between past, present, and future, between men and women, between the

artist and the world, between parents and children, and between different cultures are brought to fruition. As well, her earlier explorations of the conventions of prose fiction, its techniques of narration, temporal ordering, and image patterning, achieve in *The Diviners* a compelling and sophisticated synthesis. (19)

"A Reading of the Text" is subdivided under four headings: "Narrative Structure"; "History, Fiction, Myth"; "Diviners All: Characters in *The Diviners*"; and "House and Garden: Place in *The Diviners*." In the subsection on "Narrative Structure," Warwick itemizes the "narrative devices or techniques," including "movies, photographs, dreams, newspaper articles, oral tales, songs, letters," that contribute "to both the revelation of Morag's life story and the novel's investigation of the nature of fiction and language" (20). She then explains how the narrative method alternates between first-person and external third-person to convey the *illusion* that "Morag is describing herself from a detached perspective" (21). Warwick chronicles the events in the present as they occur, part by part, but she emphasizes, "this time frame is expanded to encompass all of Morag's life through memory" (22). Morag's collection of photographs, for example, is one of "the many narrative devices used in *The Diviners* to reveal Morag's history" (22): as she examines each *Snapshot*, Morag "constructs the story of her life" (23). Similarly, Morag's *Memorybank Movies* "encompass the whole of Morag's life up to the present. . . . arranged in chronological order" (24-25). Warwick explains that "[t]hroughout the novel, the time line of the present is intersected by that of the past, so that as we learn of Morag's ongoing experience we also learn of her history. . . . The idea of the past not as 'then,' but as interpenetrating 'now' is crucial to an understanding of both *The Diviners*'s themes and structure" (25-26).

In the next subsection, Warwick draws on Northrop Frye's definition of history, fiction, and myth. She demonstrates how the divisions between history, fiction and myth are blurred in Laurence's novel: "In *The Diviners*, this complex interweaving of actual events and varied interpretations of events results in a multilayered text in which all its voices interact to produce new meanings and new understandings of existence" (38), as illustrated by the tales told by Christie and Jules.

Warwick proceeds to show how Morag's fictions, especially her five novels—*Spear of Innocence*, *Prospero's Child*, *Jonah*, *Shadow of Eden*, and, finally, *The Diviners*—reveal Morag combining real and fictional people: "The reader's recognition of *The Diviners* as both Morag's text and Laurence's text suggests that it may be read as both a fictionalized rendering of Morag's life and of Laurence's" (45). Warwick delineates the parallels between the character's life and that of her creator. She also shows how the reappearance of characters from previous Manawaka fictions indicates the interconnectedness of human community, emblemized by the re-emergence of the plaid pin and hunting knife, suggesting that Morag is Hagar's "daughter by fiction" (51).

"Diviners All: Characters in *The Diviners*" explains how this, the largest cast in Laurence's fiction, is divided according to the narrative's two time-lines of past and present, to demonstrate "the interpenetration of past, present, and future" (55). By delineating Jules, Pique, Christie, Brooke, and Royland in detail, Warwick demonstrates how they are "Diviners All."

"House and Garden: Place in *The Diviners*" discusses the importance of place, both natural and architectural, in the scheme of action and imagery of the novel, as Morag's journey of life takes her from innocence to experience and finally to her own riverside paradise. Warwick pursues the significance of cemetery and nuisance grounds, islands and gardens from the literal level to the symbolic, showing how Laurence's use of the river image to convey the continuity of life leads to an understanding of the importance of language and art to the human community.

The section on "Critical Reception," a standard feature in the ECW series on Canadian Fiction, is the only part of Warwick's volume that disappoints. "To survey all the critical responses to the novel that have appeared since 1975 would require more space than is available here" (15), she acknowledges, offering instead merely "an outline of the various approaches that have been used in discussions of *The Diviners*" (15). In a brief discussion of the early reviews, Warwick mentions the "ambivalent response" of Robert Fulford and of Marian Engel. Then she summarizes the general approaches of critical essays that address either the complex relation between form and content, or the feminist content of *The Diviners*. Again Warwick mentions only two critics, Clara Thomas and Ildiko de Papp Carrington, although her final Works Cited section is far more inclusive. Warwick concludes this section by acknowledging that "[m]any other critical discussions of *The Diviners* deserve attention here, but space is limited" (17). Indeed. But despite the weakness of this section of the book, *River of Now and Then: Margaret Laurence's "The Diviners"* offers concise and precise perceptions that will prove invaluable to students and scholars alike.

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Derek Wright. *Wole Soyinka Revisited*. New York: Twayne Publishers, 1993. pp. vii, 219.

The title *Wole Soyinka Revisited* is both accurate and short of the mark. In this book, Derek Wright thoroughly examines the literary, religious and philosophical background to Soyinka's work. However, when Wright turns to the individual texts, he emphasizes the more accessible plays and autobiographies at the expense of the more challenging and emotion-laden plays and poetry. For example, too much is made of *Dance of the Forests*, and too little of the poetry as a whole.